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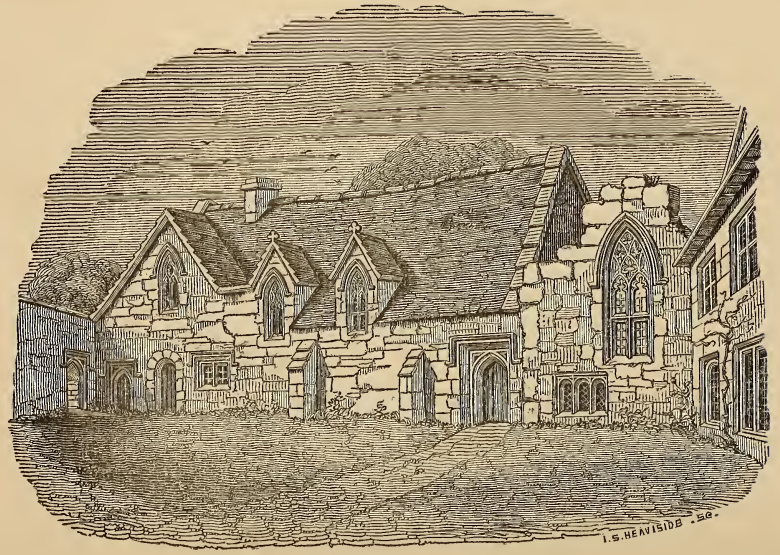
CUMNOR PLACE, BERKS,

WITH BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES OF

THE LADY AMY DUDLEY,

AND OF

ANTHONY FORSTER, Esq.



WEST SIDE OF THE QUADRANGLE OF CUMNOR PLACE.

AN

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT

OF

CUMNOR PLACE,

BERKS,

WITH BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES OF

THE LADY AMY DUDLEY

AND OF

ANTHONY FORSTER, Esq.

SOMETIME M.P. FOR ABINGDON.

FOLLOWED BY SOME REMARKS ON THE STATEMENTS IN SIR WALTER SCOTT'S KENILWORTH; AND A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PARISH OF CUMNOR AND ITS ANTIQUITIES.

BY ALFRED DURLING BARTLETT,

OF ABINGDON.

In winter's tedious night, sit by the fire,
With good old folks; and let them tell thee tales
Of woeful ages, long ago betid.

Shakesp. Richard II.

OXFORD AND LONDON,

JOHN HENRY PARKER.

1850.

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TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE

MONTAGU BERTIE EARL OF ABINGDON,

BARON NORREYS OF RYCOTE, IN THE COUNTY OF OXFORD, LORD LIEUTENANT OF BERKSHIRE, HIGH STEWARD OF ABINGDON, AND LORD OF THE HUNDRED OF HORMER, AND OF THE MANOR OF CUMNOR, BERKS.

My Lord,

From your Lordship holding the Manor of Cumnor, and your ancestors having done so for more than two centuries, moreover from knowing the warm interest you take in the place, I have thought it might be appropriate to preface the account I am about to publish by a few remarks addressed to your Lordship.

Cumnor Place is a spot which excites a thrilling interest in the breast of all who are familiar with the mournful history of Amy Robsart, especially

as that tale has been traditionally preserved by the villagers, and pourtrayed by the romantic pen of Sir Walter Scott in his Kenilworth.

Deeply interested by that history, I visited the spot a few years back, and having been gradually drawn into inquiries respecting the locality, materials have accumulated on my hands, which I have deemed may be interesting, not only to your Lordship as possessor of the Manor, but to many persons who are connected with the neighbourhood, and even to the general reader.

I will not anticipate the developement of the details of the tragedy that forms the topic of highest interest in connexion with Cumnor Place. I will only mention, that in examining the records of it, I have studiously avoided being carried away by romantic sentiment or mere tradition, deeming truth the most valuable object; and I have only alleged what I support by documentary evidence, supplied from various remote quarters by the valuable assistance of friends; whose researches and communications I gratefully acknowledge.

Even after the removal of the exaggerations of fiction, sufficient interest attaches to the spot, to constitute it a shrine of hallowed sympathy for the sorrows and lamentable decease of a virtuous and suffering Lady.

Requesting your Lordship to receive the expression of my respect, in thus announcing to you the origin and purport of this publication,

I have the honour to subscribe myself,

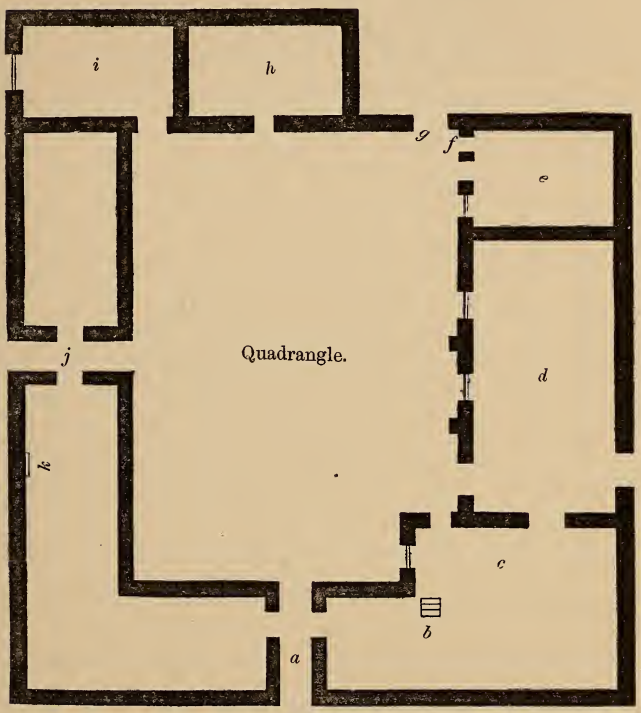
Your Lordship's most obedient servant,

A. D. Bartlett.

Abingdon, March 1, 1850.

GROUND PLAN OF CUMNOR PLACE,

AS CORRECTLY AS IT CAN BE TRACED.



North.

REFERENCE.

- *a* Entrance to the quadrangle.
- *b* Staircase to Long Gallery, &c.
- *c* Supposed buttery.
- *d* Hall.
- *e* Room known as the butler's pantry.
- *f* Door leading to Lady Dudley's chamber.
- *g* Entrance to the garden.
- *h* Part converted into a malt-house.
- *i* The Chapel.
- *j* Arch into churchyard.
- *k* Remains of a chimney-piece.

CUMNOR PLACE.

——forsaken stood the hall,
Worms ate the floors, the tap'stry fled the wall;
No fire the kitchen's cheerless grate displayed,
No cheerful light the long-closed sash conveyed.

CRABBE.

THE village of Cumnor is situate in the Hundred of Hormer, at the north-western extremity of Berkshire, three miles from Oxford, and four from Abingdon. It is built on the brow of a hill, and is but thinly peopled, the inhabitants being all either engaged in, or dependent on, agricultural pursuits.

The parish may be traced in close union with the once splendid Monastery of Abingdon, from the very earliest annals of that institution; it was its chief domain, and the Lord Abbot for the time being was Rector of the parish, and Lord of the manor. The Mansion attached to the estate

was both the Rectory and the Manor-house, and was retained by the Monastery for the Abbot's country seat. In all ancient documents it is called Cumnor Place; but it afterwards acquired the name of Cumnor Hall, by which it is now familiarly known; and subsequently from the villagers it received the appellation of Dudley Castle.

The edifice, which was constructed of stone, and slated, stood on the west side of the churchyard, on a gentle eminence commanding the rich and beautiful vale of Berks, and formed a quadrangle, the principal front facing the south; but, like most monastic buildings of the class, it was low and massive, and the situation exceedingly retired; but the salubrity of the air, and the beauty of the prospect, must have made it a most agreeable retreat from the confines of the Monastery during the summer season.

From the accounts preserved amid the wreck that has swept over the old Mansion, and what has been gathered from the testimony of living witnesses, the buildings composing the quadrangle inclosed an area of about seventy-two feet in length, by about fifty-two in breadth, and appeared to have been all built at one period. Portions of the architecture bore traces of the Tudor style;

but this was the introduction of Anthony Forster, after he had purchased the property. It was erected by the Ecclesiastics of Abingdon, but no entry can be discovered, in any extant document of the Abbey, that would lead to the date of its foundation. All writers, however, concur in fixing it in the reign of Edward III. and about the time of the great plague, which for nine years raged with such devastation, that, according to Baker, "it so wasted the people, that scarce a tenth of all "sorts was left alive;" and of this being about the period there cannot be much question, as those parts of the fabric, that retained their primitive state, accorded in every respect with the architecture of that age, and there was no fragment in any part of it that could have been assigned to a more remote era.

The purpose for which Cumnor Place was originally intended, has been a subject upon which authors and others have disagreed. Anthony Wood notices it thus; "At y^e^ west end of y^e^ church is "y^e^ rain^g^ of an antient mannor house; some say it "was a removall of y^e^ Monks of Abington att some "times; some say, againe, it was a Cell[a]." And Ashmole thus; "At the west end of the church

[a] MS. vol. 20. in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

" are the ruins of a manor antiently belonging (as a " Cell or Place of removal, as some report) to the " Monks of Abingdon." As to its having been a Cell, in the literal acceptation of the word, there is no ground whatever for believing such to have been the case, neither is there any intimation in any ecclesiastical work to warrant such a supposition.

The opinion, that it was constructed as a lazaretto, or place of removal, for the Monks of Abingdon, in case of an epidemic prevailing in the town, has been much entertained, and is founded on the record of first-fruits and tenths, 26 Hen. VIII. wherein it is said, the park and closes, &c. about it paid no first-fruits; " Quia reservantur in " manibus nunc abbatis ut in tempore predeces- " sorum suorum causa infirmitatis sive plage in " villa Abendon[b];" and this idea is strengthened by the fact, that it was a practice of the Ecclesiastics to erect such places in healthy situations to avoid infection, or for the recovery of those infected during such visitations. But this notion in a great measure loses its support, when the magnitude and structure of the building are taken into

[b] Vide Dr. Buckler's Replies to Rowe More's Enquiries in Bib. Topo Brit.

consideration; indeed one of its upholders appears distrustful for this reason, observing, "the buildings, though they presented no appearance of "grandeur, were constructed in a style far superior "to the other lazarettos in the vicinity of Oxford[c];" and it is at variance with the assertion of Dugdale, that it was the Abbot's "country seat, as Abbot "for life." Lyson, in the Mag. Brit. *Berkshire*, p. 213. thus alludes to it; "Cumner Place, "which was one of the country seats of the Abbots "of Abingdon, having been the rectorial house, "reserved in the hands of the Abbot, stands on the "west side of the church-yard; it is built round a "quadrangle, and retains nearly its original form. "The hall, now used as a granary, and the chapel[d], "occupy the west side of the quadrangle, and from "the style of the windows seem to have been built "as early as the fourteenth century." But at page 270 of the same work, the author confirms what has been here previously noticed, as to its having been a place of resort for the monks in time of plague. But taking all circumstances into consideration, the most feasible solution of the question would appear to be, that it was designed for the

[c] Gentleman's Magazine, 1821.

[d] Appendix, Note A.

Rectory and Manor-house, and intended as a country seat for the Abbot for the time being. At the period of the Reformation it was so used; and besides being Rector and Lord of the Manor, the Abbot was also Lord of the Hundred, and it was here from time immemorial that both the Hundred and Manor Courts were holden.

Although the date of the erection has been almost unanimously agreed on, no one has ventured to suggest the founder; but if the roll of those who were Abbots about that period be referred to, a probable clue may be discovered. In 1331, William de Comenore was elected to the Abbacy; and it may be inferred from his name, he was either a native, or closely connected with the parish; and it may have occurred to him to fix upon the site, from a feeling of attachment or veneration for the place of his descent. He however survived his election only about two years, which was an insufficient time to admit of its completion, which devolved on his successor; who in that case would have been able to finish it about the time of the plague previously noticed, as having occurred in the reign of Edward III. This hypothesis may also serve to account for the tradition associating it with pestilence.

At the commencement of the differences between Henry VIII. and the Pope, which gradually widened and ultimately ended in the destruction of the monasteries, the Abbey of Abingdon was presided over by Thomas Rowland alias Penthecost, a man from his vacillating character easily won to further the measures of the King in his determination to annihilate the authority of the sovereign Pontiff in England. "He[e] was among the first to acknowledge the King's supremacy in 1534; and on the 9th of February, 1538, with the rest of his convent, signed the surrender of his monastery. For his ready compliance he was rewarded with the Manor of Cumnor, which had been his country seat as Abbot for life, or until he should have preferment to the value of £223 per annum." The grant to the ex-Abbot bears date a few days after the surrender, viz. the 23d of February; and in a note in Dugdale[f], it is said he died at Cumnor in the time of Edward VI.

The first lay possessor of the estate and mansion was George Owen, physician to Henry VIII.; to whom the King, by Letters Patent dated at Windsor, October 8, 1546, granted it, upon the surrender to the Crown of some lands in Oxfordshire, the site of

[e] Dugd. Monast. vol. i. p. 510. [f] Ibid.

Rowley Abbey, and a sum of £309. 12s. 9d. At the time of this grant, Cumnor Place seems to have been the residence of Oliver Wellesborne, a man of family and distinction, who had acquired very considerable property at the dissolution of the religious establishments in the neighbourhood. On the 24th of April, 1558, the estate was settled by George Owen upon his son William's marriage with Ursula daughter of Alexander Fettiplace. In 1561, after the death of his father, William Owen sold his estates at Cumnor to Anthony Forster, who was then tenanting the Mansion. How long he had resided in it cannot be discovered, but most likely some little time previously to the mysterious death of Lady Dudley, which happened there on the 8th of September in the preceding year. On becoming owner, Forster began making very extensive alterations and improvements; and if the dates which were inserted in various parts of the building have been correctly transcribed, it is clear they were in progress at his death, and afterwards completed in accordance with his plans. It must have been at this period that Cumnor Place reached the climax of its splendour, and may be said to have been as replete in accommodation, and as much in accordance with the abodes of the gentry of the early

part of the Elizabethan age, as the old building would allow.

Forster died in 1572, and in his will devised it to his friend and patron, the Earl of Leicester; but his widow with her sisters seem to have continued to inhabit it until her death in 1599. It afterwards passed, together with the manor, into the family of the present proprietor, the Earl of Abingdon, but when or under what circumstances is not ascertainable.

Upon the decease of Mrs. Forster, it was never again the abode of the opulent, and for upwards of a century remained deserted; during which period of superstition, the recollection of Lady Dudley's melancholy end was revived among the ignorant villagers, whose imaginations conjured up forms and horrors before unheard of; and hence arose the legendary tales, that have descended to the present day. Why Cumnor Place remained so long unoccupied cannot be accounted for, unless upon the supposition, that towards the close of Elizabeth's reign, a great change took place in the habitations of the gentry, and that notwithstanding the great outlay expended in making it a convenient residence, it was still ill adapted for such a purpose; but whatever were the true reasons for its abandonment, the man-

sion, once the pride, at length became the dread of the village, from the belief that it was haunted. Decay followed fast on desertion, and, with the aid of the wanton and mischievous, before a century had rolled away, it had become almost a ruin, and had acquired the name of Dudley Castle, from a notion that it was Lady Dudley's ghost that haunted it, and disturbed the peace of the village. The apparition was said to appear chiefly in the form of a beautiful woman, superbly attired, and was mostly to be seen at the foot of a stone staircase, in the north-western angle of the building, where the remains of her Ladyship are said to have been discovered. At length the panic became so general, and the building so dreaded, that the fear-stricken superstitious villagers had recourse to exorcism to expel the spirit; and the tradition yet remaining is, that the ceremony was performed by nine Parsons from Oxford, who laid the ghost in a pond in the adjoining close; and it is said that the water never afterwards froze over the spot. This story exists in the neighbourhood to the present day, and the pond is still pointed out as the receptacle of Madame Dudley's spirit.

Rather more than a century ago, a part of the building was repaired and fitted up for the resi-

dence of a farmer and maltster, who converted the other parts to the uses of his business; and after the house had been for some years so occupied, it was patched up and made into tenements for labourers; and in the year 1810, nearly the whole was taken down to obtain materials for rebuilding Wytham church, and the wreck that remained was in the course of a few years demolished. There is a story now current in the village, that the ghost was never effectually laid, and that it exercised its power to the terror and annoyance of the inmates as long as the place was inhabited; and it is asserted, that at times the candles would become almost extinguished, and the subdued light assume an unnatural hue; while at other times the inmates would be aroused from their slumbers in the dead of night by the most terrific and unearthly noises.

The Gentleman's Magazine of 1821, contains a minute but incorrect description of The Place, and its several apartments. That account has been carefully revised, and the inaccuracies corrected, from the information of parties to whom it was well known before any part was removed.

The mansion stood back a short distance from the road, the intervening space being a court yard,

inclosed by a substantial stone wall, which commenced not far from the north-west corner of the present churchyard, and was continued along the front and round to the out-offices at the back of the western side, with which it formed a junction. The wall was lofty, but reduced on each side of the entrance to within about four feet of the ground, the reduced part being surmounted with palisades. A portion of the lower course of the masonry still remains, and is of a magnitude both unusual and unnecessary for a work of this class. The principal approach was towards the western end of the wall, through a large carriage gateway, which when the place was pulled down had gone completely to decay. In the masonry over the arch was an oblong pannel, inscribed,

Janua vitæ verbum Domini Anthonius Forster. 1575.

The reduction of the wall and the addition of the palisades were no doubt Forster's doing, to relieve the heaviness and seclusion of "that lonely pile." The date on this inscription is somewhat mysterious, and cannot satisfactorily be accounted for. It represents, that Forster placed it there in 1575, whereas he had then been dead three years; and the only explanation that can be offered is

upon the presumption, that the entrance was in progress at his death, and completed in accordance with his design in the year it was dated, when his widow or Leicester caused the tablet with the admonitory phrase and the addition of his name to be placed over the gateway.

Within the wall was the court yard, and on each side of the drive approaching the mansion a row of yew trees. In the centre of the north side of the building opposite the front gateway was the principal entrance to the quadrangle, which was formed by an architrave composed of plain moulding rising from the ground. The archway was groined, and decorated at the intersection of the ribs with a central sculptured boss, and was about nine feet in height. The rooms in the ground story of this side were four in number, two on each side, which were entered from the archway; they were rather small, but well proportioned, and highly finished. The door cases were very elegant, and the windows uniform, of the Tudor style, but only substituted; they were composed of two cinquefoil arched lights, inclosed in square frames. The chimney pieces were richly adorned. The outer doorways were removed to Wytham, and one of them re-erected on the north side of the tower, and the other now forms a com-

munication between the Earl of Abingdon's garden and the churchyard; but the chimney pieces, through the unskilfulness of the workmen, were broken and spoiled in extracting them from the walls. Over these rooms and the entrance was a passage known to the villagers as the "Long Gallery," extending the whole length of this side. It was lighted by windows looking upon the quadrangle, and divided by a partition from a large chamber, which in the original appropriation of the building was most likely the dormitory. In the east wall of this chamber was a large window opening upon the churchyard, inclosed in an elegant painted architrave, and composed of two cinquefoil lights, divided horizontally by a transom, with elaborate tracery at the end of the arch; over which, at the gable end of the roof, was a small stone cross. The Long Gallery was reached by a circular newel stone staircase, which was built towards the south-western angle of this range, the access to it being through the rooms on the basement, and the one which will be next described.

At the northern extremity of the west side on the ground floor was a large room, that projected several feet into the quadrangle beyond the line of the other buildings, and which, from its proximity

and facility of access to the hall and kitchen, may have been designed for the buttery. It had a window in its eastern and western walls, the former of a square form, divided into three cinque-foil lights. There were two outer doorways, one into the quadrangle at the south-east corner of the projection, and another that led into a back yard, wherein were the kitchen and other offices. Over this room was a spacious and elegant apartment, approached by the before-mentioned staircase; it had but one window, and that opened into the quadrangle, and is reported to have been the largest and most elaborate in the mansion. This window was very carefully removed, and has been re-erected in the east wall of the chancel of Wytham church. The original appropriation of this room there is no means of ascertaining, as long previous to the demolition of the building this part had become so extremely ruinous, that the villagers were in continual expectation of its fall. Tradition assigns this as the chamber in which Lady Dudley reposed the night of her death, and where it is said she suffered the first acts of violence. Wood, Aubrey, and Ashmole, each say, that for the purpose of more easily accomplishing her destruction, she had been removed from her usual chamber,

which, according to the local tradition, was at the extreme end of this side of the edifice; but in whatever way her death was occasioned, there can be no doubt of this being the fatal staircase, and that at the foot of it her dead body was found.

The hall retained its primitive state, and remained perfect to the last; it adjoined the room supposed to have been the buttery, with which it is said to have communicated in the inside by a double arched entrance. It was situated in the centre of the west range, and was of an oblong form, and is reported to have measured in length from north to south forty-four feet, and in breadth from east to west twenty-two feet. The walls, although but fourteen feet high, and more than a yard in thickness, were strengthened by two large projecting buttresses on each side, to support the enormous weight of the roof, which was of an equilateral shape. The principal entrance was towards the north end of the quadrangle, through a pointed arch, inclosed in a square architrave, and bounded by a sub-architrave. This doorway has been re-erected in the porch of Wytham church. Opposite this doorway was one of very rude workmanship, communicating with the offices behind, and over it the date 1571 carved, between

the initials of Forster's name. On each side of the hall were two windows, for the reception of which the walls were carried up a considerable height, above the springing of the roof, and terminated with pedimental heads surmounted with cross capstones. The windows were bounded by pointed architraves, and inclosed by sub-architraves springing from corbels representing human heads: they were each divided by a mullion into two lights, subdivided by a small transom, the upper division being ornamented with trefoil or cinquefoil arched heads. The tracery was fanciful and elegant, and three of them are re-erected in Wytham church. Each of these windows was formerly filled with painted glass, and many curious fragments remained long after the conversion of the hall into a granary, to which purpose it was at last appropriated, but not a vestige was left when the building was pulled down. Dr. Buckler, Vicar of Cumnor, writing in 1759, thus observes[g]: "About four years "ago the arms of the Abbey were to be seen prettily "painted in the remains of the glass in one of the "windows, but some careless hand, or the fingers of "some admirer of antiquity, has robbed us of them." The roof was of timber, and richly ornamented, and

[g] Replies to Rowe More in Bib. Topo. Brit.

supported by immense beams, carved with bold and handsome mouldings, resting on stone corbels, sculptured to resemble angels, and other figures, bearing shields, some of which were charged with arms, while others were quite plain. The principal cross beams, at their intersection, were adorned with bosses, on which were carved shields of arms and flowers. The pannels of the roof were ceiled; and so firmly were the beams attached, that when the building was taken down, they were with the greatest difficulty severed, while many split to pieces in wrenching them asunder. At the south end was a curious ancient stone chimney piece; the uprights were wrought into channelled mouldings, and supported an entablature, at each end of which was a shield, one bearing the arms of the Abbey of Abingdon, the other plain. In the centre were the letters IHS in old characters, embossed in a curious cipher; and the intermediate spaces were divided into square pannels, ornamented with circles enclosing quatrefoils. Anthony Wood, in his MS. vol. before quoted from, remarks, "In y^e^ Hall thereof, over y^e^ chimney, are these "armes, a cross patonie int—4 martletts, a lyon "ramp—there be also miters cut in several places "of y^e^ house." And Dr. Buckler, in his replies to

Rowe More's enquiries, thus writes: "In the hall "of this monkish edifice, which is now (1759) "turned into a granary, there is a large old stone "chimney piece, on which are carved two mitres, "and between the name of IHS in ancient "characters, at one end of it, are the arms of the "Abbey of Abingdon, at the other a shield." And the same writer records, "Over a door case in the "hall is this date, 1575."

At the south end of the buildings, on the western side, was a neat room, lighted by a square window opening into the quadrangle, separated into two divisions, each terminated by a cinquefoil arched head. The original entrance was by a small doorway at the extreme end, which had been altered into the Tudor style; this was afterwards closed internally, and appropriated solely as the mode of access to the chamber over; and in lieu, a somewhat unsightly semicircular arched doorway was cut through the wall, between the before-mentioned doorway and the window. This room was known as the butler's pantry, but for what reason cannot be ascertained, unless it was appropriated to the person who served Forster in that capacity, and thus acquired the name. Above was a large apartment, with an elegant pointed arched window,

nearly resembling those of the hall, but larger, also looking into the quadrangle. This was called Lady Dudley's chamber, and is said to have been her dormitory during her residence at the mansion. It was so known in Wood's time, who, in the before-cited MS. volume, notes, " In this house is a " chamber called Dudley's chamber." And in the same MS. the author distinguishes it from that in which the attack on her is said to have been made, as follows: " They make advantage to convey her " to another chamber, where her bed's head should " stand just against a doore, which she did not " know off." Both Aubrey and Ashmole make similar distinctions.

The south side of the quadrangle abutted upon the pleasure gardens, and is reported to have contained the most elegant suite of apartments in the mansion. At the western end was a handsome gateway, communicating with the gardens, of a similar order to the one that led into the hall, but richer in its execution; it measured eight feet in height by three feet four inches in width, and was formed by an elegant pointed arch, inclosed by an architrave of a square form, the spandrils being filled with trefoil pannels. The architrave on the exterior was enriched with a deep hollow

moulding, and bounded by a sub-architrave, supported by two slender circular columns having octangular capitals, and was terminated by a small embattled cornice. This doorway was carefully removed, and re-erected by Lord Abingdon's directions at the entrance to Wytham churchyard; and over it, between the cornice and coping of the wall, his Lordship has caused to be inserted that part of the pannel, which contained the phrase,

Janua vitæ verbum Domini.

and which had so long surmounted the archway in front of the road; but the other part of the pannel which bore Forster's name and the date was cut off.

The building and rooms adjoining this gateway appear to have gone to ruin earlier than other parts of the fabric, and had been converted into a malthouse. In the side walls were a range of windows corresponding in architectural feature with those on the opposite side.

At the south-eastern angle was a small chapel, which remained more perfect than any other part of the south side; it is said to have measured in length twenty-two feet by fifteen in breadth; the east end abutted on the churchyard, and somewhat resembled

that of the opposite side. The south windows were small, but bounded by pointed architraves, and part of the northern wall abutted on the east buildings. The chapel was entered through a plain pointed archway in the south-east corner of the quadrangle; the interior of the roof was finely timbered, the beams reposing upon corbels grotesquely carved, respecting which many popular tales had been in circulation to alarm the timorous. The floor and seats had all been removed before it was made into a cow house, to which use it was afterwards desecrated.

The existing wall at the west end of the churchyard formed the back of the east side of the quadrangle, which contained apartments of a more ordinary class. The arch of communication between The Place and the churchyard is yet visible, and was in the centre of the building. Northward of this arch is still to be seen the remains of a chimney piece wrought in the wall; on the entablature is a series of quatrefoils rudely indented. Beneath this range of the structure, as well as that on the north side, was extensive cellaring, but in what part the entrance was, cannot now be ascertained.

The offices and outbuildings were behind the

west side, and were from time to time destroyed; and there is scarcely an inhabitant now alive who has any recollection of their ruins. The gardens shared the same fate, but the terrace walks may yet be traced round and about the three adjoining closes, which were the pleasure grounds, and originally formed one enclosure, called *The Park*, which name is still retained.

When Cumnor Place was in the zenith of its splendour, the great attraction must have been the Park; the terrace walks which encircled it, the stately trees and capacious fish ponds with which it was ornamented, and the church elevated conspicuously in the immediate rear of the Mansion, all added their charms to the natural beauty of the spot; a pleasing contrast to the distant uncultivated downs which form the southern boundary of the vale. A complete change, however, has now swept over the former interesting aspect of the scene. The church indeed is an abiding representative of former ages, and the resting-place of some of those whose lives were spent at this monastic abode, while round the sacred edifice rests the remains of many who felt the bounty of its owners. The gardens and grounds, wherein the unfortunate Amy passed so many cheerless

hours, have disappeared; their site is now in the occupation of the agriculturist, and for his convenience the present partition of them has been made. A few fine elms scattered here and there are all that is left to aid in realizing the former picturesque appearance of this retreat, where we are privileged to sympathize with suffering innocence and blighted affection, although truth dispels from the story the exaggerated horrors with which those sufferings have been pourtrayed.

THE LADY AMY DUDLEY.

"Alas! my children, human life
"Is but a tale of woe,
"And very mournful is the tale
"Which ye so fain would know."

THE HERMIT OF WARKWORTH.

THE family of the Robsarts, of which this Lady became the representative, were descended from Lord Robert Robsart, Baron of Cannon in Heinhault, who entered into the English service during the war of Edward III. with France, and greatly distinguished himself in the many actions in which he was engaged during the reign of Edward and his successor. He died, leaving three sons, John, Lewis, and Theodorick; all of whom joined the English army, and became distinguished commanders.

John[a], the eldest, was born in the year 1390, and embarked in the crusade to the Holy Land; where he signalized himself, and acquired the crest which has descended to the Earl of Orford. He was created a Knight Banneret in the reign of Richard II. "And for the good services of his "beloved and faithful Knight," Henry IV. shortly after ascending the throne, granted him an annuity of £100 for his life, which was confirmed by the succeeding Sovereign, Henry V. in whose service he was actively and prominently employed, in the wars that ensued on the continent. Sir John was one selected by Henry to confer with the King of France concerning the English Monarch's claim to the Crown of that kingdom, and to treat for his marriage with the Princess Catherine, the French King's daughter; and when the treaty had been concluded, he was left in attendance on the Princess until the nuptials could be celebrated; after which he returned with the King and Queen to England. During this reign he was elected a Knight of the Garter; and upon his royal master's death in France, attended his remains to this country, and then again returned to his military duties in France in the following year.

[a] Appendix, Note B.

In the second year of Henry VI. he was naturalized; which event is thus noticed in Collins's Peerage, vol. v. p. 644. "This Sir John, being born "in Heinhalt, was naturalized in the second year "of King Henry VI.; and in the preamble of the "Patent it is recited, That the King, in consi- "deration of the long and faithful services of Sir "John Robsart, Knight, to his dear father and "grandfather, and also because he did homage to "his father, with the advice and assent of the "Lords spiritual and temporal, and the Commons "of England in Parliament assembled, grants "to the said Sir John, that he should be made "a native of this kingdom, &c."

In 1431, upon the death of his brother Lewis, who was also a Knight of the Garter, and who, after his marriage with the daughter and heiress of Lord Bouchier, took the title, Sir John was found to be his heir.

Henry VI. renewed the pension granted by Henry IV.; also one of £50 a year made by Henry V. out of the castle, forest, and lordship of Rockingham, and confirmed it to his son John for life. Sir John died in 1450, and was buried in Saint Francis' Chapel, in the Grey Friars, London, now Christchurch; where a raised tomb was erected

to his memory, with his effigy in the livery of the Garter, and this inscription,

> Hic jacet strenuus vir dom Johannes
> Robsard valens miles in armis qui
> obiit xxiv Decembris, mccccl.

He was succeeded by his son John, of whom nothing appears to be known. The next representative of the family was Sir Theodorick, or, as he was called, Sir Terry, son of the last-named John Robsart, who married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Thomas Kiderston, Knight, of Siderstone, Norfolk, and died in or previously to the year 1497. By this alliance the family acquired the manors of Bircham Newton, and Siderstone, in that county, of which William, the eldest son of the marriage, died possessed in 1517; whereupon the estates devolved on his brother John, the second son, who was afterwards Knighted, and of whom a few historical traces remain. The matter of chief interest is, that he married Elizabeth, daughter of John Scott, Esquire, of Camberwell, Surrey, but in what year is unknown; there is, however, no doubt that it was previous to the year 1530. The issue of this marriage

was an only child, Amy. Where Sir John resided at his daughter's birth, does not appear; in fact, there is no mention either of his residence, or that of any earlier member of the family, until 1546, when, according to Bloomfield's History of Norfolk, he, with Dame Elizabeth his wife, dwelt in Stanfield Hall, then the property of the Appleyards; and from this circumstance Stanfield Hall has been regarded as the birthplace of Amy Robsart. The same author in the third volume of his History, under the title Siderstone, observes of this Sir John, he "was Lord of this manor, Sheriff "of Norfolk and Suffolk, in 1st Edward VI. "I find that this John Robsart, called late of "Windham in Norfolk, alias of Stanfield, in "the parish of Wymondham, to have a pardon "from the King by the advice of the Duke of "Somerset the Protector, for all treasons, mur-"ders, insurrections, &c. before 20th January, "1st Edward VI." but in what treasonable acts he had been engaged, or was suspected of, there is no record remaining.

In 1551, he was joined with the Earl of Sussex, Sir Roger Townsend, and Sir John Fermore, in the commission of Lieutenantship for Norfolk, and died, according to Bloomfield, in the first or

second of Philip and Mary. The precise date is not recorded, but it is quite clear he was dead in 1554, as in that year, Elizabeth his widow presented Thomas Angier to the Living of Bircham Newton. Upon the death of Sir John, the subject of this biography became entitled to the family estates, which were of considerable magnitude.

When or where she was born is not indeed a matter of certainty. The first allusion to her is contained in the Will of her grandmother, dated 1535, and, from the nature of a bequest to her, it is more than probable, her birth took place sometime between the years 1525 and 1530, and probably at Stanfield Hall.

After the accession of Edward VI. it is well known that the Court was divided by the factions and rivalries of the two great statesmen of the day, the Duke of Somerset and the Earl of Warwick, afterwards Duke of Northumberland. These differences were attempted to be healed by an alliance between the younger branches of the two families; and accordingly, on the 3d of June, 1549, the Lord Lisle, son of the Earl, was married to the Lady Jane, the Duke's daughter; and on the next day, the Earl's younger son Robert espoused Amy Robsart. Both nuptials

were solemnized at the Royal Palace at Sheen[b], and honoured with the presence of the King, who thus records the marriages in the diary written with his own hand, and which is preserved in the British Museum.

"1549.

"June

"3. The King cam to schein, where was a mariag "mad betwen The L Lisle, the'rl of warwics sone, and "the ladi anne, daughter to the duke of Somerset; "wich don, and a faire diner made, and daunsing "finished, the King and the ladies went into tow "chambers mad of bowis, wher first he saw six "gentlemen of on side and six of another rune "the course of the field twis ouer: ther names "hiere do folow;

"The L Edward S Jhon aplebey

[Here is a blank of about an inch.]

"And afterward com three masters of one side and "tow of another, wich rane fowre courses apece: "ther names be

[Here is a blank of half an inch.]

"Las of al came the count of ragenne w^t 3

[b] See Appendix, Note C.

"italians, who ran wth al the gentlemen fowre "courses, and afterward fought at tornay. And "so after souper he retorned to Whesminster.

"4. S Robert dudeley, third sonne to th'erle of "warwic, maried S Jon Robsartes daughter, after "wich mariage, ther were certain gentlemen that "did striue who shuld first take away a goses heade "wich was hanged alive on tow crose postes."

At the time of her marriage, Lady Dudley was most likely her husband's senior, who was then only about eighteen years of age. He was possessed of great personal attractions and natural talent, and trained in all the courtly graces and accomplishments of the period. During the following year, he was made one of the Gentlemen in Ordinary to the King, and remained in attendance on him until his death, when he took up arms with his family in favour of Lady Jane Grey, who had married his brother Lord Guildford Dudley. The attempt to seat her on the throne failing, Sir Robert, with other branches of his family, was arrested for high treason, and committed to the Tower on the 26th of July, 1553. From her marriage in 1549, until her husband's captivity, nothing whatever is known of Lady Dudley; but at this eventful crisis, and

when the horrors and ignominy of a traitor's death were apparently inevitable to her husband, she emerges from her obscurity, in the exercise of her duties as a wife; and the following brief record remains of her during this trying season.

"Another[c] Lettre to the Lieutenaunt of the "Towre, whereby he is willed to permitt these Ladies "followinge to have accesse to their husbands, and "there to tarie with them so long and at suche "tymes as by him shall be thought convenient; viz. "the Lord Ambrose's wife, the Lord Robert's wife, "Sir Frances Jobson's wife, Sir Henry Gat's wife, "and Sir Richard Corbet's wife."

On the 15th of January following, Sir Robert Dudley was arraigned at the Guildhall of London for high treason, to which charge he pleaded guilty, and thereupon received the usual sentence of a traitor; but intercession being afterwards made in his behalf, he was pardoned, and restored to his civil rights.

The only other memorial relating to Lady Dudley preceding her death, is that of a letter bearing her

[c] Extract from the Journals of Proceedings in the Privy Council, on the 10th of September, 1553.

signature, which may be found in the Harleian MSS. 4712, in the British Museum. The date of the year is omitted, but it must have been written in or probably after the 3d and 4th year of Philip and Mary, 1556-7, as it was in this last year, and after the demise of her father, that the grant of Siderstone, to which place the letter refers, was made to her and Dudley. There appears reason to conclude, that it was written during the latter portion of her life, when her husband was in attendance at Court, and she living in privacy in the country; and there are passages in it which seem to indicate, that there was a want of affection and a partial estrangement on his part, but still there is no positive admission that she considered herself deserted.

At the time of writing this letter, she was staying with a family of the name of Hyde, but in what locality does not appear; but from the circumstance of Mrs. Odingsells, the daughter of William Hyde, Esq. of Denchworth, Berks, being mentioned in the correspondence between Dudley and Blount, during the coroner's inquest after her death, it is very probable that this letter was written from that place, which is about four miles from Cumnor. There can, however, be very little question of Cumnor or the

vicinity being the part from whence the letter was sent, as several branches of the Hydes were settled thereabouts at the period, and one of the family was at the time living at a considerable mansion within the parish, called Blagrove, some remains of which are still to be seen.

Mr. Flowerdew, the party to whom it is directed, seems from other extant letters to have been the steward of Dudley's Norfolk property, and to have been consulted by him on a negociation for the purchase of some land in that neighbourhood. The following is a copy of the Lady Amy's letter.

" Mr. Flowerdue,

" I undarstand by Gruse y^t^ you put him in " remembreance of y^t^ you spake to me of con- " sarning y^e^ goyng of sertayne shepe at Systorne, " & althow I forgot to mowe my Lorde therof " before his departyng, he beyng sore trubeled w^t^ " wayty affares, ane I not being all together in " quyet for his soden departyng; yet, not wt " standyng, knowing your acostomid fryndshype " towards my Lordchip and me, I nether may nor " can deney you y^t^ requeste in my lordes absence " of myn owne awtoryte, ye & y^t^ war a gretar " matter, as, if any good occasyon may serve you,

" so trye me; descyring you furdar y^{t} you wyll " mak salle of y^{e} wolle so sone as ys possyble, " althowe you sell yt for vj^{s} the stone, or as you " wolde sell for your sealf, for my lorde so ernystly " requered me at his departyng to se thosse poore " men satysfyed, as thowe yt had bene a matter " dependyng uppon lyff; wherfore I force not to " sustayne a lyttell losse, therby to satysfy my " Lordes desyer; and so to send y^{t} mony to " Grysses house to London by Brydwell, to whom " my lorde hath gewen order for y^{e} pament therof. " And thus I ende, alwayes trobelyng you, wyssyng " y^{t} occasyon may serve me to requyte you. Untyll " y^{t} tyme, I must pay you w^{t} thankes, and so to " God I leve you.

" From Mr. Heydes this vij of Auguste.

" Your assured duryng lyffe,

" Amye Duddley."

[Addressed on the outside of the other half sheet,]

" To my veary frynd Mr. Flowerdwe the ellder " Norff geive this."

On the 9th of September, 1560, when Dudley was in attendance on the Queen at Windsor, a messenger arrived from Cumnor with a letter,

containing the intelligence of the death of his wife on the previous day, by a fall down some stairs; and although it may be gleaned from the ensuing correspondence that Bowes the messenger was attached to the household at the mansion of Cumnor Place, where the disastrous occurrence had taken place, he was unable to give very little, if any, account of how it happened, being in all probability absent with the rest of the servants at the fair at Abingdon.

Dudley's first impression on receipt of the news, appears to have been most remarkable and mysterious; he at once expressed an opinion, that her death had not been the result of an accident, but of violence, and that he should be accused of being implicated in her destruction. The most reasonable explanation of these expressions that can be suggested, consistent with a perfectly guiltless conscience, seems to be, that he must have at once perceived that so unlooked for an event, occurring in so extraordinary a manner, would give his enemies the opportunity of asserting that his wife had been murdered, and that, notwithstanding his absence from the scene, they would charge him with being the originator of the plot; and he could not but have felt, that his past estrangement from her

would be held up as a ground of suspicion, and would be generally interpreted as a strong presumption of guilt.

His conduct also, as well as his expressions, exposes him to invidious remarks, and may be by the prejudiced regarded as additional evidence in proof of the grave charge that has been so strongly urged against him. One would have thought that he would at once have started for the scene of his bereavement, and have satisfied himself whether there were any grounds to support his suspicions; but apprehensive of crimination from his wife's relations, he immediately dispatches the news to them in Norfolk, that they might be present at the coroner's enquiry, which he knew to be inevitable, to satisfy themselves as to the true cause and manner of her death; and he then sits down and writes a letter of instructions on the subject to a gentleman in his confidence named Blount.

Such a course of proceeding on the part of Dudley, coupled with his expressions, do not at first sight seem altogether consistent with a complete state of innocence; but his subsequent conduct, in promoting the inquiry before the coroner, tends greatly to relieve the distrust that otherwise

would be felt, and must be properly weighed in arriving at an impartial conclusion of his guilt or innocence; indeed it would be the extreme of prejudice to insinuate that there is any thing in the ensuing correspondence that betrays an attempt on his part to conceal a crime, or to baffle investigation.

The following letter is the first that passed between Dudley and Blount, pending the coroner's inquest at Cumnor. The letters are bound with other MSS. and commence at page 703, in the second of three folio volumes in the Pepysian Library, Cambridge, lettered at the back, "*Papers of State.*" From the handwriting they appear to have been made towards the close of the 16th century, probably about twenty or twenty-five years after the period under consideration.

"Cosin Blount,

"Immediatelie upon y^r^ deptinge from me, there "came to me Bowes, by whom I do understande that "my wife is dead, and, as he saithe, by a falle from "a paire of stayres; little other understandinge can "I have of him. The greatnes and the suddennes of "the mysfortune doth so pplex me untill I do heare

"from you how the matter standethe, or howe this
"evill shuld light upon me; considering what the
"malicious world will bruyte as I can take no rest.
"And, because I have no waie to purge my-selfe
"of the malicious talke that I knowe the wicked
"worlde will use, but one, which is the verie plaine
"troth to be knowen, I Do praie yo^{u}, as yo^{u} have
"loved me, and do tender me and my quietnes,
"and as nowe my special trust is in yo^{u}, That will
"use all the devises and meanes you can possible
"for the learnyng of the trothe, wherein have no
"respect to any living p-son; And, as by yo^{u} owne
"travell and diligence, So likewise by order of lawe,
"I meane, by calling of the coroner, and charginge
"him to the uttermost from me to have good
"regarde to make choyse of no light or slight
"psons, But the discretest and substancial men,
"for the Juries; suche as for there knowledge may
"be able to serche thorowlie and duelie, by al
"manner of examynacons, the bottome of the
"matter; and for the^{re} uprightnes, will earnestlie
"and sincerlie deale therein without respect. And
"that the bodie be viewd and serched accordinglie
"by them, and in everie respect to procede by order
"and lawe. In the mean tyme, Cosin Blount, Let
"me be advertysed from yo^{u}, by this berer, w^{t} all

"spede, howe the matter dothe stande; For, as "the cause and the manner thereof doth mvel- "ously trouble me, considering my case many "waies, so shall I not be at rest, till I may be "ascertayned thereof; Praying yo^{u} even, as my "truste is in you, and as I ever loved yo^{u}, do not "dissemble w^{t} me, neither let any thinge be hidd "from me, But sende me y^{r} trewe conceyte and "opinion of the matter; whether it happened by "evill chaunce, or by Villanye, and faile not to let "me heare contynewallie from yo^{u}, and thus fare "yo^{u} well, in moch haste from Windsore, this ixth "of September, in the eveninge,

"Y^{r} lovinge frende and kynsman,

"moch perplexed,

"R. D.

"I have sent for my brother Appleyarde, bycause "he is her brother, and other of her frendes also, to "be theare, that they may be previe, and se how "all things do proceade."

From this letter, and the reply of Blount, it may be inferred, that the latter had left Dudley at Windsor on the 9th of Sept. for the purpose of proceeding to Cumnor, but that previously to his

arriving at Abingdon, which lay in his route, he met with Bowes on his way to Windsor with the above news, and from him learnt what had happened to Lady Dudley. Bowes, it would seem, informed Blount all that he knew of the circumstance, and also that when it occurred, all the domestics belonging to the establishment were absent at Abingdon fair.

It is somewhat strange that Blount, on being apprised of Lady Dudley's death, should, like Dudley, have felt distrust of fair means having been used towards her; and his manner is in some degree open to suspicion, inasmuch as he did not, upon hearing the disastrous intelligence, hasten on to Cumnor, or immediately return to Windsor, to consult or take fresh instructions from Dudley. He however continued on his journey as far as Abingdon, where he stayed the night at an inn, for the avowed but somewhat singular purpose of ascertaining the particulars relating to the catastrophe and the public feeling in the neighbourhood, touching the cause. The better to accomplish this end, he dissembles with the landlord, with whom he manifestly assumes to be unconscious of what had taken place, and leads him to believe that he is merely passing the

night at his house, on his road into Gloucestershire, and while at supper sends for him to learn if there was any news stirring. As a matter of course, the all engrossing topic of conversation, the death of Lady Dudley, is communicated, and he then proceeds to inquire how she had come by the fall; to which the landlord replied, he knew not. Dissatisfied with this answer, Blount asked what was his judgment and the judgment of the people; when the landlord, attempting an evasion of the question, replied, that some were disposed to say well, and some evil. This, however, was by no means satisfactory to Blount, who was bent upon extracting from his host more than he appeared willing to disclose, and whom he supposed, like the rest of his fraternity to be more conversant with the tales and rumours of the locality than the generality of the public, a country inn in those days being the place where all the news that was abroad was sure to be discussed and propagated; he therefore presses the landlord more closely for his opinion. "By "my troth, said he, I judge it a very misfortune, "because it chanced at that honest gentleman's "(Forster's) house, his great honesty doth much "cut the evil thoughts of the people." This remark in a measure appeased Blount, who,

still pretending entire ignorance of every thing connected with the sad affair, proceeded to interrogate his companion as to what explanation the domestics at the mansion gave of the matter; and was told, that they were not at home at the time, but at Abingdon fair. Upon this, Blount proceeded to catechise the landlord as to how that chanced, and elicits in answer, that "it is said how "that she rose very early, and commanded all her "sort to go to the fair, and would suffer none to "tarry at home, and thereof much is judged."

It may here be remarked, that previously to this conversation, Blount could not have received the above letter from Dudley, which was dispatched to him by a person of the name of Bristo, who in all probability delivered it to Blount on the next day, viz. the 10th, after he had arrived at Cumnor, and it is therefore beyond a doubt that the suspicions that presented themselves in the minds both of Dudley and Blount on hearing her Ladyship was dead, were also rife in the vicinity of Cumnor before either the one or the other were made acquainted with the fact of her decease.

The proceedings of Blount, on reaching the scene of the calamity, do not appear to have been characterized by any remarkable incident. He

finds some of the jury already assembled at the house, and to them he communicates Dudley's wishes, and the directions he had received from him, with reference to the inquiry about to be entered on, and he then sets about investigating the matter. He at once discovers that it is surrounded with such suspicious circumstances, and is so enveloped in mystery, that, to use his own language, "it passeth the judgment of any man to say how it is." But the details of Blount's proceedings are more fully disclosed in his own letter to Dudley, which was written from Cumnor on the day after his arrival there, and is as follows.

"Maie it please yo^{r} Lordshipe to understande
"that I have receyved youre lres by Bryses, the
"contents whereof I do well perceyve and that
"yo^{r} lordship was advertised by bowes ymediatelie
"upon my departinge, that my ladie was deade. and
"also yo^{r} straite charge given me that I shuld use
"all the Devices and policies that I can for the
"trewe understanding of the matter, as well by
"myne owne travell, as by thorder of lawe; As in
"callinge the coroner, gevinge him charge that he
"chowse a discrete and substanciall Jurie, for the
"viewe of the bodie, And that no corrupcion shuld

"be used, or psons respected. Yo^{r} L. great
"reasons that maketh you so earnestlie searche to
"learne athrothe The same w^{t} y^{r} earnest comande-
"ment dothe make me to do my best therein. The
"psent advertisement I can give to yo^{r} L at this
"tyme is, To trewe it is that my ladie is dead, and
"as it seamethe w^{t} a fall, But yet howe or whiche
"waie I cannot lerne. Y^{re} L shall heare the maner
"of my proceedinge since I cam from you; The
"sam nyghte I cam from Windsore I laie at
"Abington all that nyght, and, bicause I was
"desirous to heare what newys went abrode in the
"countrie, At my supper I called for myne hoste,
"and asked him what newes was there about,
"takinge upon me I was going into Glocestershier;
"he saide there was fallen a greate mysfortune
"within three or iiij myles of the towne; he saide,
"my lorde Robert Duddeleys wyfe was deade, and
"I axed howe, and he saide, by a mysfortune, as
"he hard by a fall from a paire of stayres: I asked
"him by what chaunce. he said, he knewe not, I
"axked him what was his Judgement and the
"Judgment of the people, he saide, some weare
"disposed to saie well and some evill. What is yo^{r}
"Judgment, said I. By my trothe, said he, I judge
"it a mysfortune, bicause it chaunced in that

"honest gentleman's house, hys great honestie,
"said he, dothe moche cutt the evill thoughts of
"the people. Mythink, said I, that some of her
"people that wayted upon her shuld somewhat
"saie to this. No, Sir, said he, but litle, for it was
"saide that they were all here at the fayre, and
"none left w^t her. Howe myght that chaunce,
"said I. Then said he, it is saide how that she rose
"that daie verie earelie, and comanded all her
"sorte to go the fayre, and wold suffer none to
"tarie at home. And thereof is moche judged, and
"trewlie, my lorde, I did first learne of Bowes
"as I met w^t him comynge towards y^r L of his
"owne being that daie; and of all the rest of there
"beinge, who affirmed that she wold not that daie
"suffer one of her owne sorte to tarye at home,
"and was so earnest to have them gone to the
"faire, that w^t any of her owne sorte that made
"reason of tarying atwhome she was verie angrie,
"and cam to Mrs. Odingsells, the wedowe, that
"lieth with Anthony Fforster, who refused that daie
"to go to the faire, and was very angrie w^t her also,
"Bycause she saide it was no daie for gentlewomen
"to go in, but said the morrowe was moch better,
"And then wold she goo; whereunto my ladie
"answered and saide, That she might chowse and

"go at her pleasure, but all hers shuld go; and "was verie angrye. They asked who shuld kepe "her companye if they all went. She said Mrs. "Owen shuld kepe her companye at Dyner. The "same tale dothe Purto, who dothe dearlie love "her, confirm; certenly, my lorde, as little while "as I have bene here, I have harde diverse tales "of her that maketh me to judge her a straunge "woman of mynde. In askinge of Pirto what she "might thinke of this matter, either chaunce or "villany, she saide, By her faithe she dothe judge "it verie chaunce, and nether done by man nor by "her-selfe. For her-selfe she saide, she was a "good vertuous gentlewoman and daielie would "praie upon her knees; and divers tymes she saithe "that she hath harde her praie to god to deliver "her from Disperaconne. Then said I, she myght "have a evell toy in her mynde, No, good Mr. "Blount, said Pirto, do not judge so of my wordes, "yf you shuld so gether, I am sorie I saide so "moche, my lorde it is most strange that this "chaunce shuld fall upon yo^{n}, as it passeth the "Judgment of any man to saie howe it is, but then "the tales I do here of her makethe me to thinke "she had a strange mynde in her, as I will tell yo^{n} at "my comyng. But to th inquest yo^{n} wold have

" so verie circu'spectlie chosen by the coroner for " the understandinge of the trothe, yo^r L nedith " not to doubt of ther well chosinge. Before my " coming, the inquest were chosen, and p^t of them " at the house; yf I be able to judge of men and " of their ablenes, I judge them, and speciallie " some of them, to be as wise and as able men to " be chosen upon suche a matter as anie men, " beinge but countrie-men, as ever I sawe, and as " well able to answeare for there doings before " who so ever they shall be called. And for there " trewe serche w^tout respect of pson. I have done " yo^r message unto y^m, I have good hope they will " conceale no fawte yf any be; For as they are " wise, So are they, as I here, parte of them verie " enemes to Anthony Fforster. god give them, w^t " there wisdome indifferenciie, and then be they well " chosen men. More advertisement at this tyme I " cannot give y^r L, but, as I can lerne so will I ad- " vertise, Wishing y^r L to putt awaie sorowe and re- " joice, whatsoever fall out of y^r owne inosency, by " the which, in tyme, doubt not, but that malicious " reports shall turne upon their backs, that can be " glad to wish or saie against yo^u. And thus I humblie " take my leve from Comner, the xjth of September,

" Y^r Lordships lif and leving, T. b.

" Y^re L hath done verie well in sending f^r Mr. Appleyarde."

By this letter it is certain, that the chief ground of suspicion rested upon the fact, that at the time of the fall, both Lady Dudley's and Forster's servants were away at the fair, which it so happened this year fell on a Sunday. The truth of the very remarkable assertion of Lady Dudley being angry with Mrs. Odingsells, (who, it must be borne in mind, was a lady of family and station,) because she declined to go to the fair, and of her not suffering one of her own attendants to remain at home, was most likely proved to the jury as an explanation of the cause of so few being at Cumnor Place when the fatal fall took place. Forster's absence is not alluded to, and therefore it may be supposed that he was at home at the time, and probably the only male person in the house, and that from these untoward circumstances, and the very singular manner of her death, the suspicions against him arose.

There is a passage in Blount's letter highly favourable to Forster, as it diminishes the probability of his having been accessory to the death of Lady Dudley. For in the conversation recounted to have passed between Lady Dudley and Mrs. Odingsells, the former states, that if Mrs. Odingsells should be absent, Mrs. Owen would be her companion at dinner. This lady

may most reasonably be concluded to have been the wife of Mr. Owen, then proprietor of Cumnor. And so it would appear that both Mrs. Odingsells and Mrs. Owen were staying in the house, and that they were there when Lady Dudley met with her death. Under such circumstances, it is hardly possible to conceive, that Forster would have attempted so atrocious a crime under his own roof; and it would be most improbable to suppose, that he could have secured the connivance of these two ladies, even if he had induced all the servants purposely to absent themselves. Moreover it appears, that it was Lady Dudley and not Forster that insisted on the visit of the servants to Abingdon Fair.

Blount's letter reaches Dudley, who had in the mean time gone to Kew, and causes him very great uneasiness. His apprehension that his wife had been murdered, and that he should be considered privy to the act, appears, if any thing, increased by this communication. Upon receipt of it, he again writes to his friend and emissary, urging him to repeat to the jury his earnest desire that they should, without either fear or favour, proceed in the most rigid manner with the investigation. The following is the letter.

"Cosin Blount: Vntill I heare from yo^{u} againe

" howe the matter fallethe out, in verie trothe I
" cannot be in quiet, and yet yo^{u} do well satisfye
" me w^{t} the discrete Jurie yo^{u} saie are chosen
" alredie; vnto whome I praie you saie from me,
" that I require them, as ever I shall thinke good
" of them, that they will, accordinge to these
" dueties, earnestlie, carefullie, and trewlie, deale
" in this matter, to fynde it as they shall se it fall
" out. And if it fall out a chaunce or mysfortune,
" then so to saie; and if it appeare a villanye, (as
" God forbid so myschievous or wicked bodie shuld
" lyve!) then to finde it so. And, god willing, I
" shall never feare the due prosecutione accord-
" inglie, what person soever it may appeare any
" waie to touche; as well as for the iust punnysh-
" ment of the act, as for myne owne trewe iusti-
" ficacone, for as I wold be sorie in my harte any
" such evill should be comytted, So shall it well
" appeare to the worlde my Innocensie, by my
" dealing in the matter, if it shall so fall out. And,
" therefore, Cosin Blount, I seke chefelie trothe in
" this case, whiche I praie yo^{u} still to haue regarde
" vnto, wthout any favo^{r} to be shewed either wone
" waie or other. When yo^{u} haue done my message
" to them, I require yo^{u} not to staie to serche
" thorolie yo^{r}selfe, alwaies that I may be satisfied.
" And that w^{t} such convenient spede as yo^{u} maie.

"Thus fare yo^{u} well, in hast, at Kewe, this xijth of "September.

"Yo^{rs} assured,

"R. D."

Again, Blount conveys to the jury Dudley's commands, and as the inquiry advanced, it is unquestionable that there was a suspicion of Lady Dudley having been murdered, and of Forster being implicated in the crime. Blount appears faithfully to discharge his trust, and he resorts to every means he can conceive likely to ascertain the true facts; he endeavours secretly to discover the feeling of the jury, but is unsuccessful; and after remaining at Cumnor three days, he professes not to be able to regard her Ladyship's death otherwise than as an accident. He insinuates that some of the jury appeared to be quite desirous of criminating Forster if they could; and considers their not being able to prove any thing against him, ought to produce a conviction that there were no grounds to consider it an act of violence. Blount's next communication is as under.

"I have done y^{r} Lordship's message vnto the "iurye, yo^{u} nede not to byde them to be carefull; "Whether equitie of the cause or malice to forster

"do forbyd it, I knowe not. They take great "paynes to learne a trothe: to morrowe I will "wayte upon yo^{r} L, and as I come, I will brake "my fast at Abington, and there I shall mete wth "one or two of the iurye, and what I can I will "bringe, they be verie secrete, and yet I do heare "a whysperinge that they can find no p'sumptions "of evell. And if I maie saie to yo^{r} L. my con- "science, I think some of them be sorie for it, god "forgive me, and yf I iudge amysse, myne owne "openion is moche quieted; the more I serche of "it, the more free it doth appeare to me. I have "almost nothing that can make me so moche to "think that any man shuld be the Doer thereof, "as when I think yo^{r} L. Wif before all other "wemen, shuld have such a chaunce; the cir- "cumstances and as many thinges as I can learne "doth prswade me that onelie mysfortune hath "done it, and nothing els. My-self will wayte "vpon yo^{r} L. tomorrowe, and saie what I knowe. "in the meane tyme, I humblie tak my leave from "Comner, the xiijth of September,

"Yo^{r} L. lif and loving,

"T. b."

It would seem before the receipt of the last letter, the foreman of the jury had written to

Dudley, apprising him that his wife's death did appear plainly to have been caused by an accident, but it is evident, that at the time the letter was penned, a verdict to that effect had not been returned. The receipt of such a communication under such circumstances will by some be suspiciously regarded; both on the part of Dudley, and the foreman. This letter, however, seems in a great measure to have relieved his anxiety; nevertheless, he does not abate in his expressions of eagerness to sift the transaction, and to push the enquiry to the utmost possible limit. He requests that another gentleman, Sir Richard Blount, and also Mr. Norris, will assist in furtherance of the investigation. His intimation to this effect is conveyed to his friend Thomas Blount at Cumnor, in the following letter.

"I have reseved a lre from one Smythe, one "that seamethe to be foreman of the iurye. "I prᵉeve by his lres, that he and the rest have "and do travell verie diligentlie and circumspectlie "for the tryall of that matter, whiche they have "charge of; and for any thing that I hear, they "by any serche or examynacone they can make in "the world hetherto, it dothe plainelie appeare, he

"saithe, a verie mysfortune, whiche, for my owne "parte, Cosin Blount, dothe moch satisfie and "quiet me. Nevertheles, bicawse of my thoroue "quietnes and all others hereafter, my desire is "that they may contynewe in there enquery, and "examynacone to the vttermost, as longe as they "lawfullie maie. Yea, and when they haue geven "there verdyt, thoughe it be never so plainelie "founde, Assuredlie I do wish that an-other sub-"stantciall company of honest men might trye "againe for the more knowledge of trothe. I have "also requested S^r^ Ric. Blount, who is a prfite honest "gentleman, to helpe to the furtheraunce thereof. "I trust he be w^th^ yo^u^, or thing long w^th^ Mr. Norris "likewise. Appleyarde, I heare, hath been there, as "I appointed, and Arthure Robsert, her brothers; "yf any more of her frendes had bene to be had, "I wold also haue caused them to haue seene, and "bene previe to all the dealings there; well, cosin, "god's will be done; and I wishe he had made me "the porest that crepeth on the grounde, so this "myschaunce had not happened to me. But, good "cosin, according to my trust, haue care above all "things that there be playne, sencere, and direct "dealing for the full tryall of this matter. Touch-"inge Smythe and the rest, I meane no more to

"deale w^{t} them, but let them proceade, in the "name of god, accordinglie, and I am ryght glad "they be all strangers to me. Thus fare yo^{u} well, "in moche hast, from Windsore.

"Yo^{r} loving frend and kinsman,

"R. D."

What subsequently took place before the coroner, or how long the inquest lasted after the 13th, or what became of Blount, are only subjects of conjecture, for there are no further documents extant; and here, so far as is known, ended the correspondence.

There appears no ground for questioning the fairness of the inquiry, which, it must be borne in mind, was attended by Arthur Robsart, a relation of Lady Dudley's, and by Mr. Appleyard, probably the owner of Stanfield Hall, an old friend of her family, and ended, after a tedious and patient investigation, with a verdict of mischance, or what would now be termed accidental death, which was equivalent to an entire acquittal of Forster and all others of violence. It is, however, certain, that there were circumstances of very grave suspicion, and that an unusual degree of public feeling was roused in all parts of the country.

The only person known to have taken an active and conspicuous part in the public outcry was Thomas Leaver, a distinguished preacher of the day, a prebendary of Durham, and Master of Sherborne Hospital, who appears to have been impressed with the general opinion, that Lady Dudley had been murdered, in furtherance of her husband's ambitious designs, and that it was his intention to hush up the matter, and prevent an inquiry into the cause of her death; and possibly feeling that the sacred duties of his office demanded that he should step forward, and claim on behalf of the public a discovery of the truth or falsehood of the current rumours, he took upon himself to address the subjoined letter to two of the Queen's principal advisers, being, it may be gathered, at the time unaware that a coroner's jury had been impannelled for that purpose, and that Dudley himself was urging the unflinching discharge of their duty. This document is copied from "The Burleigh State Papers at Hatfield," p. 362, under the date A. D. 1560.

"The grace of God be unto your Honors, with "mi humble commendations and harte thanks in "Christ; for it hath pleased God to place you in "Autorite with Wisdome and Willes to advance

" his Glore, the Quene's Majesties godli Honor,
" and the peacable Welthe of this Realme; and
" that also I am well assured of your faverable
" minds towards me, to take in writing accord-
" ing to mi Meaning, fathfulli, reverentli, and
" lovingli.

" Therefore, I am moved and boldned bi writing
" to signifie unto you, that here in these Partes
" seemeth unto me to be a grevous and dangerous
" suspition and muttering of the Death of her
" which was the Wife of my Lord Robert Dudlei.
" And now mi Desire and Trust is, that the rather
" bi your godli discrete devise and diligence, through
" the Quene's Majesties Autorite, ernest searching
" and triing out of the Truethe with dwe Punish-
" ment, if ani be found guilte in this Mater, mai be
" openli known. For if no search nor inquire be
" made and known, the displeasure of God, the
" dishonor of the Quene, and the Danger of the
" whole Realme is to be feared. And bi dwe Inquire
" and Justice openli known sureli God shalbe wel
" pleased and served, the Quene's Majestie wortheli
" commended, and her loving subjects comfortabli
" quieted. The Lord God guide you by his Grace
" in this and all other your godli Travels, as he
" knoweth to be most expedient in Christ.

"Scriblet at Coventre, the 17th of September, bi
"your faithfulli in Christ

"Thomas Lever.

"Unto the right Honorable Sir Francis
"Knolls, and Sir William Cecill, Knights,
"and to either of them be these dd."

Whether Leaver was satisfied with the verdict of the jury, there is nothing to shew, but it may be presumed he was, as no more is afterwards heard of him on the subject.

There is too much reason for believing, that the last part of Lady Dudley's life was embittered by the estranged conduct of her husband, and was passed in privacy, if not in strict seclusion, under the surveillance of his dependants; but however culpable may have been his conduct towards her while alive, he cannot be charged with not having paid due respect to her remains, which he caused to be interred in the chancel of St. Mary's Church, Oxford, and her funeral to be conducted in the most ostentatious manner possible, but his motives for thus acting are certainly questionable; it may be, that her sad fate had induced remorse, and rekindled his affection for her, and that he was anxious, from a sense of duty, to discharge the

only tribute of regard left him to bestow; or it may have been merely an exhibition to dazzle the eye by the costliness of the last earthly ceremony, and thus allay the public feeling towards him.

The following is an account of her funeral, extracted from an old manuscript volume in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, giving an account of the funerals of the nobility; the writing which is extremely illegible, identifies it as having been written at the date of the funeral.

"*The funerall of the Lady Amye Robsert, wife of the "L^d^ Robert Dudley, Knt. of the Garter, A^o^.* 1560.

(MSS. Dugdale, T. 2. fol. 77.)

"Th enterment of the right noble Lady Amy "Robsert, late wyffe to the right noble the Lord "Robert Dudelley, knight and compagnion of the "most noble ordre of the Garter, and M^r^ of the "horse to the Queen's most excellent mat^ie^, who "depted out of this world on Sounday, beinge our "Lady day, the viij day of September, at a keepe "of one Mr. Forster, 3 myle of Oxford, the seconde "yere of the reigne of o^r^ Sov^r^aign lady Queen "Elizabeth, by &c. Quene of Englande, Fraunce, "and Ireland, defender of the faith, &c. A^o^ dni "1560.

"Fyrst, after that the said lady was thus depted "out of this transsetory world, she was saffely "cered and coffened, and so remayned there tyll "Fryday, the day of the said Moneth of Sep- "tember, on the w^ch^ day she was secreately brought "to Glocester College, a lytell w^th^out the towne of "Oxford, the w^ch^ plasse of Gloster couledge was "hanged w^th^ blake cloth, and garnesshed w^th^ "Skocheons of his armes and heres in palle, that "is to say, a great chamber where the mourners "did dyne, and at the chamber wher the gentle- "women did dyne, and beneth the steres a great "hall, all w^ch^ places, as afforesaide, were hanged "w^th^ blake cloth, and garnesshed w^th^ Skochions; "the howsse beinge thus furnesshed, ther the "corsse remayned till the Buryall, and till suche "tyme as all things were redy for the same.

"*The manner of the garnessinge of the church "w^th^ the hersse.*

"Item, it was appoynted that the said corsse "should be buryed in o^r^ lady church, in the said "Towne of Oxfourd, the w^ch^ churche was hanged "w^th^ blake cloth, and garnesshed w^th^ Skocheons, "and in the mydell eyle in the upper end ther "was maid a hersse 4 square, contayning in

" leingth 10 fote, and in bredth 7 fote and a haulf,
" and in height 10 fote on the sydes, and on the
" tope 14 fote, and from the tope came rochements
" to eche corner of the said square frame, in the
" w^ch^ tope of the hersse was set 2 Skochions of
" Armes on paste paper in metall wrought w^th^ com-
" partements of gold, and bereng ther penseles
" round aboute them, beneth that the said tope
" was kevered all over w^th^ fyne blake cloth, and in
" every square ther was set 3 Skochions in metall,
" then on the Rochements ther was set penseles of
" sarsenet on metall w^th^ bages, then on the square
" beneth the saide Rochements went a bredth of
" blake velvet, on the w^ch^ ther was pyned skocheons
" in metall, on eche syde 3, and on eche end 2, and
" at the upper eye of the velvet ther was set pen-
" seles round aboute, and at the neither eye ther
" was fastyned a Vallence of blak sarsenet wrytten
" w^th^ Lres of Gold, and frynged w^th^ a fringe of
" blake sylke, ther was a floor of bords, and under
" that flouer ther was a Vale of Bokeram w^th^ Armes
" on the same, the 4 postes were kovered w^th^ fyne
" blacke cloth, and on eche poste was fastened
" 2 Skochions, and on the top of every poste ther
" was a great Skochon of Armes on past paper
" w^th^ a compartement on the nether parte of the

" rayles of the saide hersse was hanged doubled w^th^
" blake cloth and garnesshed w^th^ Skochions. Then
" 4 foote from the same hersse went a Rayll of
" Tymber, the w^ch^ was covered w^th^ blake and gar-
" nesshed w^th^ Skochions in lyke manner as aforsaid,
" and between the said ralle and the hersse ther
" was set vij stoles, that is to say, at the hedd one,
" and on eche syde 3, the w^ch^ were covered w^th^
" blake cloth, and cushions at the same to kneel
" on, the quere was also hounge and garnesshed in
" like manner, and at the upper end of the said
" quere was maid a vaute of bryke, where the said
" corsse was buryed. Thus all things redy, the
" day of the buryall was appoynted, the w^ch^ was
" Sonday, the day of Sept^r^, on the w^ch^
" day they proceed to the Churche in lyke
" manner.

" *The Order of the procedinge to the churche*
" *w^th^ the said Corsse from Gloster Colledge to*
" *o^r^ Lady churche in Oxforde.*

" Furste the 2 Conducters w^th^ blake staves in
" there Hands to led the way.

" Then the pore men and women in gownes to
" the nomber of 80.

" The Universities 2 and 2 together, accordinge

" to the degres of the Colleges, and before every " housse, ther officers w^th^ ther staves.

" Then the quere in surplesses singenge, and " after them the Minester.

" Then R crosse pursuvant in his mournyng- " gowne, his hod on his hed, and his cote of armes " on his bake.

" Then gentillmen having blake gownes w^th^ ther " hoods on ther shoulders.

" Then Lancaster herauld in his longe gowne, " his hod on his hed.

" Then the baner of Armes borne by Mr. Appel- " yard in his longe gowne, his hod on his hed.

" Then Clarenceulx King of Armes, in his longe " gowne, and his hood on his hed, and in his cote " of armes.

" Then the Corpes borne by 8 talle yeomen, for " that the wey was farre, and 4 assystants to them, " and on eche syde of the Corsse went 2 assystants " touching the corsse in long gownes, and ther " hoods on ther hedds, and on eche corner a ba- " nerolle borne by a gentleman in a long gowne, " his hod on his hed.

" Then the Cheiffe Morner, Mrs. Norrys, daugh- " ter and heyre of the lord Wylliams of Thame, " her Trayne borne by Mrs. Butteller the younger,

"she beinge assysted by Sir Richard Blunte,
"Knight.

"Then Mrs. Wayneman and my lady Pollard.

"Then Mrs. D'oylly and Mrs. Butteller the
"elder.

"Then Mrs. Blunte and Mrs. Mutlowe.

"Then 3 yeomen in blak cotes to seperate the
"morners from the other gentlewomen.

"Then all other gentlewomen, having blake,
"2 and 2.

"Then all yeomen 2 and 2 in blake cotes.

"Then the Mayor of Oxford and his brethren.

"Then after them all that would, and in this
"ordre they proceed to the Church in at the West
"dore, and so to the hersse wher the corsse was
"plased, and on eche syde of the hersse wthout the
"ralles stod 2 gentlemen holdinge the bannerroles,
"and at the fete stod he that held the great banner,
"then the Mourners were plased, the Chief at the
"hed, and on eche syde 3, thus every man plassed,
"the service began; first, sarteyne prayers, then
"the 10 Commandments, the quere answering in
"Peyke-songe, then the Pystle and the Gospell
"began, and after the gospell the offeringe began
"in manner following.

"*First,*

"*The order of the offeringe.*

"Fyrste the Cheff mourner came fourth having "before her the Officers of Armes, her trayne "beinge borne, the assystants ledyng her, and the "other morners followinge her, went to the offer- "inge and offered, and retorned agayne to the "hersse.

"Then after she had maid her obeyssyance to "the Corsse, she went up agayne, havinge before "her Garter, and offered for herself and retorned.

"Then offered the Assystants to the Chieffe "Morner, and the other 4 Assystants having Cla- "renceulx before them.

"Then offered the other 6 Morners 2 after 2, "having before them Lancaster herauld.

"Then offered all gentillmen 2 and 2, havinge "the Ruge Crosse pursevante before them.

"Then the Mayor and his brethren offered, "having an offycer of Armes before them.

"Item, the offering thus don, the Sermon began, "made by Doctor Babyngton, Doctor of Devynytie, "whoes antheme was, *Beati mortui qui in Domino* "*moriuntur.*"

In the above detailed account, there is an omission of the day, on which the body was removed from Cumnor to Oxford; but from the fact of Blount's last letter being dated the 13th, and the inquest then pending, no doubt the body was then lying at the Mansion of Cumnor Place; and if such was the case, then the date may be supplied the 20th, and the interment on Sunday the 22d. Independently of which, it would have been almost an impossibility for arrangements on so costly and extensive a scale to have been completed before the last-named day.

The Court, which at the time was staying at Hampton, exhibited on the occasion a degree of respect quite unusual; unquestionably by the Queen's order, with a view both to shield Dudley from the malicious attacks of his enemies, and to mark her Majesty's approval of the termination of the very serious charge which had been so publicly made against him. This appears by the following extract from a letter in the Cotton MSS. Vesp. F. xii. f. 151. dated October 6, 1560, written by William Honyng to the Earl of Essex, then Lieutenant of Ireland.

"The say'd berer seeth the corte stuffed with

"morners (yea many of the better sort in degree)
"for the L Robertes wief, who was uppon the
"mischauncing death buried in the hed Churche
"of the University of Oxford, the cost of the
"funerelles estemed at better than ꝯj m^{l} marks."

The news of Lady Dudley's death, and the prevalent reports of her having been murdered, soon spread to the continent, where they appear to have created as much if not more excitement than in this country, and to have led to a surmise that it was the Queen's intention to marry Dudley; and so much importance did Sir Nicholas Throgmorton, then Ambassador in France, attach or pretend to attach to the rumours, that in the month of November succeeding, he dispatched one of his suite, a Mr. Jones, specially to England, to communicate them to his Sovereign, and of his interview with Elizabeth. Jones gives the following account.

"When[a] I came to the point that touched his
"case, which I set forth in as vehement terms as
"the case required, that the Duke's hatred was
"rather to her than to the Queen her sister, she
"laughed, and forthwith turned herself to the one
"side and to the other, and set her hand upon her

[a] Printed in Lord Hardwicke's State Papers, i. 165.

"face. She thereupon told me, that the matter "had been tried by the country, and found to be "contrary to that which was reported, saying that "he was then in the Court, and none of his at the "attempt at his wife's house, and that it fell out as "should neither touch his honesty or his honor; "quoth she, My Ambassador knoweth somewhat "of my mind on these matters."

At this particular time the French people were strongly incensed against Elizabeth, on the ground of her religious faith, and they were taught to look upon her as the usurper of the rights of her cousin Mary Queen of Scots to the crown of England; it is not therefore a matter of so much surprise, that they should embrace the opportunity thus offered of defaming her. Throgmorton too was both in creed and politics the opponent of Dudley, and, notwithstanding Jones's mission, and the strongly expressed opinion of his royal mistress on the subject of Lady Dudley's death, he was either unable or careless to appease the clamour with which he was on all sides surrounded, or to check the scandal of the Queen's alleged determination to marry Dudley. In this state of affairs, Sir Nicholas addresses a letter to Secretary Cecil, from which the following extract is taken.

"[b] I looked by your last to be somewhat satisfied "touching the greatest matter of all, I mean the "Queen's marriage: I know not what to think, or "how to understand your letter in that point. And "the bruits be so brim and so maliciously reported "here touching the marriage of the Lord Robert "and the death of his wife, as I know not where "to turn me, nor what countenance to bear. Sir, "I thank God I had rather perish and quail with "honesty, than live and beguile a little time with "shame. And therefore I tell you plainly, until "I hear off or on what you think in that "matter, I see no reason in the advising of her "Majesty. Marry, to you I say in private, that "albeit I do like him for some respects well, and "esteem him for many good parts and gifts of "nature that be in him, and do wish him well to "do: yet the love, duty, and affection that I bear "to the Queen's Majesty, and to the surety of "herself and her realm, doth and shall during my "life, take more place in me than any friendship "or any particular case. And therefore I say, if "that marrige take place, I know not to what "purpose any advice or counsel should be given, "for as I see into the matter none would serve."

[b] Hardwicke State Papers, vol. i. p. 121.

Although there is nothing like authentic information, that in England Dudley was immediately upon his wife's death branded with the charge of procuring her destruction, in the hope of marrying Elizabeth, yet there can be little if any doubt, of that being the imputation shortly afterwards openly reported against him; and it would seem from the following verse, in a poetical and most severe libel, entitled "Leycester's Ghost," published after his death, that this censorious observation had its source among the Queen's enemies in France.

"They were to blame that said the Queen should marry
"With mee, her horsekeeper, for so they told mee;
"But thou, Throgmorton, which this tale did carry
"From France to England, has most sharply gald mee,
"Sith my good Queene in office high extol'd mee;
"For I was master of her highnesse horse,
"I scorn'd thy words, which did my hate inforce."

It is, however, beyond a question, that Dudley did, after his wife's death, cherish the hope of being honoured with the hand of his Sovereign, and that the propriety of such an alliance was discussed at a meeting of the Privy Council, in April, 1566, when Cecil assigned the reasons that follow for not sanctioning it, one of which proves that time had

not removed from his mind the rumour, true or false, of his having been privy to his wife's destruction.

[From a minute of Secretary Cecil.]

"De matrimonio Reginæ Angliæ cum extero "principe, April, 1566.

"Reasons against E. of L—

"I. Nothing is increased by Marriadg of hym "either in Riches, Estimation, Power.

"II. It will be thought that the slanderoos "Speches of the Quene with the Erle have been "trewe.

"III. He shall study nothing but to enhanss "his owne particular Frends to Welth, to Officees, "to Lands, and to offend others.

"Sir H. Sydney	Middlemore
"Erl Warwyk	Colshill
"Sir James Croft	Wyseman
"Henry Dudley	Killigrew
"Sir Fran. Jobson	John Dudley
"Apleyard	1. 1. Christmas
"Hornsey	Fostar
"Layghton	Ellyss
"Mollynex	Middleton

"IV. He is infamed by deth of his wiff.

"V. He is farr in Debt.

"VI. He is lyke to prove unkynd or gelooss of "the Quenes Majesty[c]."

There can be no difference of opinion of Queen Elizabeth having entertained feelings of great regard for Dudley; but at the same time it is very much to be doubted whether she ever had an intention of making him her husband, although it is well authenticated that she proposed him as such to her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots, and that she showered on him almost every favour and honour in her power to bestow. But, notwithstanding all his influence, he was unable to stifle the odium of criminality in his wife's death, and his enemies took especial care not to omit an opportunity in reproaching him with it. About the year 1584, one of the most virulent libels ever written was published against him on the continent, the authorship of which is attributed to Parsons the jesuit; and upon its appearing in this country, it was repudiated by the Queen in council, on the 20th of June in the succeeding year, in a letter addressed to the Magistrates of Cheshire, wherein it is stated,

"Her Highness not only knoweth to assured "certainty the books and libels against the said

[c] Haynes, Burghley Papers, p. 444.

"Earl to be most malicious, false, and scandalous, "and such as none but an incarnate devil could "dream to be true, &c."

The book was composed in the form of a dialogue between a Scholar, a Gentleman, and a Lawyer, and is entitled, "Secret Memoirs of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester," and is also known under the title, "Leicester's Commonwealth;" and such parts as apply to the death of Lady Dudley are printed in the Appendix, H.

Leicester died on the 4th of September, 1588; but even his death did not appease the malice of his enemies; for shortly afterwards, another libel, quite as bitter as the one last cited, was composed, and is preserved in the British Museum, MS. Addit. 1926. It relates, that his spirit on leaving this world was met in the air by an evil spirit, named Sarcotheos, who deceived him by inscribing on his forehead the words, *Lettice, Amys,* as a passport to heaven; but on arriving at its portal, he was told by Peter, "Sarcotheos hath wrighten upon your "forehead the names of both your wiefs, namely, "of the Lady Amy your first wief, and of the Lady "Lettice your last wief; and he hath written them "both in blude, to shew that you lefte the one and "got the other with murder and blude." But this

was not the only defamatory publication that followed Leicester's decease; the one from which an extract has already been made, viz. Leycester's Ghost, appeared about the same time, and contains the verses in the Appendix, I.

Lady Dudley's death continued the talk and tradition of the village; and when Anthony Wood visited Cumnor, its character and circumstances had lost nothing by repetition, and there are unmistakeable marks of exaggeration and untruth in the statements at this period; for it is impossible to suppose, that any other verdict than that of murder could have been returned, if what Wood heard there had been true. He thus notes the purport of the information he acquired, in the MS. vol. before cited from.

"In this house (Cumnor Place) is a chamber, "called Dudley's chamber, the reason of which is, "y^{t} w^{n} Dudly E of Leicest was L^{d} hereof, his wife "would often retire to this place to live, Forster "abovesaid being then Tenant. Att this time "y^{e} E of Leicest then lived at the y^{e} Court, being "oe of the chiefe under Q Eliz. and being a very "handsome proper man, it was rumor'd y^{t} he was "to marry, and thought y^{t} y^{e} Q (if he was a "Batchelour or Widower) might expect to make

"him her husband: to effect which, he layed a "plott with y^e^ abovesaid Forster, his Tenant, to "make away his wife, and upo y^e^ condition he "would doe it, he would give y^t^ L^d^ship soe long "as he live: y^e^ Plot being laid, and y^e^ night "appointed, they make advantage to convey her "to another chamber, where her bed's head should "stand just against a doore which she did not "know off: in y^e^ middle of y^e^ night cae a man "with a spitt in his hand, open the privy doore, "run y^e^ spitt into her head, and tumbled her downe "staires, to make y^e^ people believe she had killed "herself: they bury her immediatly, but her "father caused her to be taken up again, enquires "into y^e^ business, and prosecutes it."

John Aubrey was the next who wrote an account of Lady Dudley's death; and he, it would seem, borrowed largely from the Secret Memoirs, adding the then tradition of the village, which, in the main fact of the perpetration, differs widely from that recorded by Wood. Aubrey states, she was either stifled or strangled before being thrown down stairs; but he follows Wood in the erroneous assertions that were made respecting her burial, and the part taken by her father. Ashmole transcribed from Aubrey, and inserted it in his History

and Antiquities of Berkshire, where Sir Walter Scott read it. The account as published in Ashmole will be found in the Appendix, K, and also in the preface to the later editions of Kenilworth.

The occurrence was next destined to assume the form of a ballad. The author of this beautiful composition, from which originated the novel of Kenilworth, and with which Sir Walter Scott expressed himself "particularly pleased," was William Julius Mickle, a native of Scotland, born about the year 1733, afterwards a corrector to the Clarendon press at Oxford, and author of the Lusiad of Camoens, the Concubine, and other poems, and who died at Wheatley near that city, October 25, 1788. At what period he wrote the ballad does not seem to be ascertained; but in it Lady Dudley is for the first time styled Countess of Leicester, a title she never attained, as that dignity was not conferred on her husband until the year 1563, three years after her death. Upon the appearance of the novel, the villagers were at first confounded by the inquiries made of them respecting the murder of the Countess; as they had never heard of any other name in connexion with the tale of her death at the mansion than that of Madame or Lady Dudley. The poem, which is printed in the Appendix, L, may be found

in Evans's Collection of Ancient Ballads, vol. iv. p. 130.

All writers, but more especially modern ones, have viewed the death of Lady Dudley in the most unfavourable light, both towards her husband and Forster; but the present state of public opinion respecting it has been produced more by the erroneous assertions of Sir Walter Scott, than from what is historically known of the circumstances. The investigation by the coroner appears not to have been preserved in the traditions of the village, and must have been soon forgotten by the inhabitants; indeed, the fact had not been satisfactorily established, and was distrusted, until the correspondence between Dudley and Blount was discovered, and which was first published by Craik as an Appendix to vol. i. of the Romance of the Peerage. It cannot therefore be wondered that the affair should have been scanned with a prejudiced eye, and it is for these reasons the judgment and opinions of modern authors have not been noticed in this memoir.

It is apparent, that, before the event happened, all regard on the part of Dudley for his wife had ceased; as in the whole of the correspondence with Blount, there is not one expression of affection towards her, nor one passage from which it may

be gleaned that he felt one pang of regret, or was even shocked at the melancholy way in which she had suddenly died; and his chief concern and care are throughout, how best he can satisfy the world, that if she really had come to her end by an act of violence, that there was no ground for saying that he was tainted with the crime.

It is certainly mysterious, that both he and Blount should have anticipated, immediately on hearing of her death, a public outcry, as if it must have resulted from violence; and but for these strange surmises entertained and avowed by them, it may fairly be said, that the letters that passed between Dudley and Blount during the inquest contain nothing but what perfectly innocent men might have written; there is, however, one way of accounting for their surmises, which has before been adverted to; and if that should be received, although it may relieve Dudley's memory of the heavy charge of being a participator in the murder of his wife, it must fix on him the character of a heartless, unkind, as well as an unfaithful husband. Blount in his first letter insinuates the probability of her having committed an act of self-destruction; and states, that one of her attendants had frequently heard her pray to God to deliver her from

desperation, and that his belief was, her mind was affected. That such was the state to which she was reduced cannot be wondered at, as she could not well have been kept in ignorance of the notoriety of her husband's attentions to others, which, with his neglect of her, she must have felt most acutely, in the retirement in which she lived at Cumnor. And if his conduct as a husband had thus been notoriously cruel, he might well conjecture so sudden and extraordinary an accident would give rise to such an imputation among his enemies.

Many parts of the current story have now been proved to be void of foundation; the misrepresentation of Forster's having occupied Cumnor Place as Dudley's tenant, at the time of Lady Dudley's death, and the misstatement of the hasty and obscure burial of her body, and its exhumation previous to the inquest, testify how little regard can be attached to the allegations in the libels; while the exaggerations in the manuscript of Wood, and the publications of Aubrey and Ashmole, exemplify the fallacy, and utter impossibility, of at all relying on the traditions of the village. Dudley especially, when three years afterwards he became Earl of Leicester, had his enemies, not the least of whom were Cecil and Throgmorton, the weight of

whose opinions must have seriously prejudiced any attempt on his part to eradicate the impressions amongst the community at large.

All the documents that have been discovered, having any claim to originality, have been chronologically arranged, and inserted in this publication, and from them the reader will be best able to form a correct judgment.

Lady Dudley left no issue, nor is she supposed to have had any. As regards her character, there is but one source from which an opinion can be formed, and that is her letter, which leads to the conclusion, that at the time it was written, she had but little of the society of her husband; that she spent her life in country retirement, busying herself in his welfare and concerns, and was unaccustomed to join the courtly circles in which he was always conspicuous. It proves her to have been a woman endowed with a meek, amiable, and considerate disposition, and possessing a deep affection for her husband; indeed, almost every passage of the letter bears traces, that though she might have been deficient in the graces and arts that would have enabled her to shine as Dudley's wife at court, in her nature were implanted the virtues and amiable qualities that best adorn the female character.

MEMOIR OF ANTHONY FORSTER, ESQ.

Seal up the mouth of outrage for a while,
Till we can clear these ambiguities,
And know their spring, their head, their true descent.
Romeo and Juliet.

After the lapse of nearly three centuries, it cannot be expected that much material will remain for the biography of one, who neither attained any very elevated position, nor acquired fame enough to stamp his name in the annals of history, or to mark his character and career above others of his class and age. If it were not for the modern revival of aspersions on him in connection with the death of Lady Dudley, the existence of such a person would by this time have been forgotten, or his name known only to the few who might chance to read his epitaph in Cumnor church; any memoir of him therefore must necessarily be both brief and imperfect.

He was the fourth and youngest son of Richard Forster, of Evelith, in the parish of Shifnal, Shropshire, by Mary, daughter of Sir Thomas Gresley. In this district the family had been very early settled. The first of whom there is any authentic record was Roger, who followed the vocation of a forester, and was keeper of the haia[a] of the Wreken forest, and died at Wellington in that neighbourhood in the reign of Edward the First. The following verification of this statement is taken from the *Calendarium Inquisitiones post mortem*, which contains extracts of the returns to the inquiries instituted by the crown, to ascertain of what land a party, who had died, was possessed at the time of his death.

6 Edward I. No. 108[b].

Roger' le, Forestarius de Welington.	Roger the Forester of Wellington.
Welington haya, extent infra forestam, de Wrekene.	Wellington, a haia extending within the forest of Wreken.

From Roger may be traced, by means of the same work, the succession of the family, pursuing

[a] Appendix, note M. [b] Vol. i. p. 65.

the like employment, until the year 1466, when the property and office, which for several generations had been held by them, escheated to the crown.

7 Edward I. No. 78[c].

Robertus Forester.	Robert Forester.
Welynton una virgata terr' Ballia forestarii de monte Gilberti.	Wellington one yard land the bailiwick of the forester of Gilbert's hill. Notes (n).

13 Edward I. No. 2.[d]

Roger' le Forester de Welington.	Roger the forester of Wellington.
Welington haia ballia.	Wellington, the haia, the bailiwick.

9 Edward III. No. 14.[e]

Johannes filius et hæres Rogeri le forester de Welynton.	John the son and heir of Roger the forester of Wellington.
Probatio ætatis.	Proof of his age.

[c] Vol. i. p. 68. [d] Id. p. 85. [e] Vol. ix. p. 440.

24 Edward III. No. 46.[f]

Joh'es le Forester Welyton.	John the forester Wellington.
Una caruc' terr' &c. per servic' custodiendi mediet' forestar' de Wrekenne.	One carucate of land, &c. by the service of keeping half the forestership of Wreken.

19 Richard II. No. 27.[g]

Will'us Forester de Welyngton.	William Forester of Wellington.
Welyngton una noca terr' contin' quartam partem unius caruc' terr'. Wreken forest custod' haie ibm.	Wellington one nook of land containing the fourth part of a carucate of land. Wreken forest the custody of the haia there.
Welyngton unum messuag' duo burgag' et unum cottag' et unum messuag' vocat Whites Place et sex assarte vocate le Stockinges infra bundas haie predicte.	Wellington one messuage, two burgages, and one cottage, and one messuage called White's Place, and six assartes called the Stockings within the bounds of the haia aforesaid.

[f] Vol. ii. p. 164.

[g] Vol. iii. p. 190.

21 Richard II. No. 27.[h]

Rogerus Forster de Welynton.	Roger Forster of Wellington.
Welynton haye chacea.	Wellington the chace of the haia.

3 Henry IV. No. 6.[i]

Roger' Forster Welington.	Roger Forster, Wellington.
Una noca terre per serjanciam custodiendi haiam in foresta de Wreken.	One nook of land by the serjeantry of keeping the haia in the forest of Wreken.

20 and 21 Hen. VI. No. 15.[k]

Rogerius Forster Welynton.	Roger Forster, Wellington.
Una noca terr' ibm contin' 4 partem, 1 car' terr' ac divers' messuag' et terr' ibm. Wreken forest ballia.	One nook of land there, containing the fourth part of one carucate of land, and divers messuages and lands there. Wreken the balliwick of the forest.

[h] Id. p. 220.
[i] Vol. iii. p. 283.
[k] Vol. iv. p. 210.

Escaet' de anno quinto Edwardi Quarti. No. 3.[1]	Eschaets in the 5th of Edward the Fourth. No. 3.
Joh'es Forster.	John Forster.
Welynton terr', &c. ibm.	Wellington, lands, &c. there.
Wreken custodia forestæ.	Wreken the custody of the forest.

The above extracts indisputably prove, that at an early period the Forsters were domiciled at Wellington, filling what was then an honourable office, but they do not appear to have possessed extensive landed property; still they must have had what in those days was considered a good estate; and although there are no public documents by which their continuance in this locality can be proved, after John had forfeited the estate and office, the fact has been established from other sources down to the close of the seventeenth century.

The adoption of the name of Forster seems to have commenced with Roger, who died about the year 1398, and is merely an abridgment of the word forester, the family avocation, respecting which, it may not be out of place to offer a few remarks.

[1] Vol. iv. p. 329.

The occupation was, during the time the forest laws were in their full rigour, considered an honourable one, and those who had sufficient interest to obtain an appointment in the royal service, were inducted by letters patent under the great seal; some however held the office in fee, paying to the King an annual fee farm rent out of the emoluments; but in all cases, previous to entering on the duties, an oath was required to be taken, expressly stipulating a faithful discharge of them [m].

In Manwood's forest laws, one of the customs to be performed at the general assize of the county is thus described, and in its fulfilment, the badge of the chace, and the device of those who thus anciently trace their descent, is prominently employed.

"Every forester is bound to appear at the "justice seat; and when he is called, he ought to "deliver his horn upon his knees to the Justice in "eyre, which is then delivered to the Marshall; "and he pays the fine of six and eight pence before "'tis redelivered."

In more civilized times, the family fixed their abode at Evelith, which, in the inscription on

[m] See Appendix, O.

Anthony Forster's tomb in Cumnor church, is termed Iphlethæ.

John, the grandfather of Anthony, was the first of his race who can be identified as residing at Evelith; but in all probability before his day it had become their seat. John married Isabel Kuffin, of Abertanet, in Montgomeryshire, but when he died is unknown. He was succeeded by his eldest son Richard, mentioned at the beginning of this memoir, who died in 1524, and left four sons, Thomas, William, Michael, and Anthony, the subject of these remarks. Thomas succeeded to the patrimony, and married Frances Gifford, and died A.D. 1567.

When Anthony was born, cannot now be ascertained; but it may fairly be presumed, his birth took place somewhere about the year 1510, and that he received an education in advance of the times, commenced probably under his relative Thomas Forster, who was prior of the neighbouring ecclesiastical institution at Woombridge, warden of Tong, and vicar of Shifnal, who died in 1520, and to whose memory an altar tomb remains in Shifnal church. The period of his marriage is also uncertain, but may be placed between the years 1530 and 1540; he espoused Ann, daughter of Reginald

Williams, of Burghfield, Berks, who was the eldest son of Sir John Williams of that place, and the brother of Lord Williams of Thame; this connection gave Anthony Forster an introduction into the best society of the age.

At the dissolution of the monasteries, he seems to have had both influence and opportunities of acquiring a fortune, of which he availed himself. In 1544, he obtained, jointly with Richard Ingram, a grant from the crown of the manor of Sidilmington, and other estates in the counties of Worcester and Warwick[m]; and in the ensuing year, the manor of Little Wenlock[n], and other property in Shropshire.

In October, 1559, he lost his wife's noble relative, Lord Williams, with whose friendship it may be assumed he was honoured until his death, as he attended his funeral as one of the four banneral bearers, being placed in the procession (according to a manuscript account of the funeral still extant in the Ashmolean library) on the right, at the head of the coffin.

Until Forster came to Cumnor, nothing whatever is known of where he lived; and the most erroneous notions, as to his occupation of that mansion, have been entertained. In the first libel

[m] Jones, Index, vol. i. [n] Ibid.

referred to, in the biography of Lady Dudley, he is described as tenant to Dudley. Wood, Aubrey, and Ashmole, all adopt the same supposition; but it has been already shewn, that when her Ladyship's death happened, the mansion and estate belonged to William Owen, of whom Forster in the following year bought it, and subsequently the lordship of the hundred of Hormer.

Having acquired a rather large landed property, and being closely allied to families of distinction, as a matter of course he became a man of importance in the neighbourhood; while the superiority of his education, and the refinement of his pursuits, brought him in contact, and gave him a standing, with the members of the adjoining University. In 1562, scarcely a year and a half after the alleged murder under his roof, when a catholic movement broke out at Merton College, Oxford, and the fellows closed the gates, and refused to admit Dr. Mann, on whom the wardenship had been conferred by the patron, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Forster, is found taking an active part in the inforcement of order; and it may be observed, that at the time of this tumult, Dudley held no appointment in the University, and therefore the appearance of Forster could not, as some might imagine, have been as his

deputy, or as supported by his interest. Wood thus describes the scene.

"Soon[o] after the new Warden comes to Oxford, "and the next day, being the 30th of March, "came with Dr. Babington, the Vice-Chancellor, "Dr. White, Warden of New College, and others, "to Merton College gate, where meeting him, "certain of the Fellows gives them letters, under "seal from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Patron "of that College, that he should be admitted "Warden thereof; but the Fellows not agreeing "at that time to give answer to his desire, deferred "the matter to the 2d of April; which day being "come, he appeared again at 9 of the clock in the "morning, accompanied with the before-mentioned "persons, Henry Norreys, of Wytham, Esq. and "Anthony Forster, Gent.; but coming to the "College gate, they found it shut, by the general "assent of the Fellows. At length, after he and "his company had tarried there awhile, sends for "Mr. John Broke, one of the senior Fellows, "desiring to let him in, and admit him; he there-"fore, being of a base and false spirit, opens the "gate by some means or other, and admits him. "At whose entrance the Fellows were so enraged,

[o] Wood's Annals, vol. ii. p. 149.

" that Mr. Hawle, as 'tis reported, gave the new " Warden a box on the ear, for his presumption " to enter into the gates without his leave."

From this it is evident, that Forster had forsaken the religion of his forefathers, and had adopted the reformed; but in what capacity he figured in this broil is not clear, and it is the only occasion in which his name is mentioned in the annals of the University.

It is rather singular, that an intimacy so close as that which must have existed between Forster and Dudley should have been formed, considering that Lord Williams, with whom the former was so nearly connected, had signalized himself by the prompt and energetic steps he took to quell the rebellion, raised by the father of the latter in favour of Lady Jane Grey, and in which Dudley was so deeply involved; but in whatever way the friendship originated, it is certain it was of no ordinary description, since Cecil, as one of his reasons why Leicester should not marry the Queen, classes Forster among those " his own particular friends," whom he should study nothing but to enhance to wealth, to offices, and to lands; a document of the date 1566, and given before at page 73.

Upon the death of Oliver Hyde, in 1570,

Forster was returned as the representative in parliament for the borough of Abingdon; and having the influence of Leicester, then High Steward of the town, and Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and being himself closely associated with the place, there could have been very little difficulty in his obtaining the seat, which he retained the remaining short period of his life. Of his political career no record remains, not even a mention of his name in the journals of the House; but there can be no diversity of opinion of his being a devoted adherent of Leicester and his party.

During his brief representation of Abingdon, he received from his constituents what at the present day would be considered some rather singular presents, entries of which remain in the account books of the corporation of that borough, and are as under.

From MS. 6th Eliz. to MS. 7th Eliz.

1570.

From the Account of Thomas Mylles, Chamberlain of the Borough of Abingdon.

" Item, paid to master fisher for one pownde
" of suger, gevin to master foster, } xiv^{d}.

" Item, paid to master Stevinson for A pottyll " of Claret wyne, gevyn also to master " foster, viii[d].

" Item, paid more to the goodman Kisbie " for a pottyll of Secke, and gevin to " master foster, xii[d]."

From MS. 7th Eliz. to MS. 8th Eliz.

1570.

From the Account of Thomas Milles, Chamberlain of the Borough of Abingdon.

" Item, paide more to the same thomas " jeners for ii cople of capons, geven to " master foster at london, viii[d]."

Forster's friendship for Leicester continued unabated until his death; and on the fifth of November, 1572, when in the last stage of sickness, he made his Will; Leicester was therein named as the chief object of his benefaction; a copy of that instrument will be found in the Appendix, (P.) After settling his worldly affairs, a very brief space only was left to him on earth; for on the fifth day after the date of the Will, he was interred in the chancel of Cumnor church. His burial,

which was the only one in the parish that year, being thus entered in the register:

"Ano Dni 1572.

"Anthoni[s] foster generosus sepult. erat 10 Novem. 1572."

Two days afterwards, viz. on the twelfth, his widow proved the Will in the Prerogative Court.

His monument[q] mentions the names of his five children; all of whom died in his lifetime, and most likely previous to his coming to reside at Cumnor, as there is no entry of their burials in the register, which commences 1559. His widow survived him twenty-seven years, and spent the rest of her days at Cumnor Place, and was buried with her husband in the chancel. Her burial thus appears in the register:

"Ano dni 1599.

"Sepult. erat m[rs]. Anna ffoster de Comn. 10[th] die Aprilis."

Ashmole, after describing the miserable deaths of Varney, and the underling who is said to have assisted Forster in the perpetration of the alleged murder, thus narrates the wretched way in which he

[q] See page 102.

says he afterwards lived. "Forster, likewise, after "this fact, being a man formerly addicted to hos- "pitality, mirth, and music, was afterwards observed "to forsake all this, and with much melancholy and "pensiveness (some say with madness) pin'd and "droop'd away." But it is utterly impossible to credit the account here given of the last part of Forster's life. No allusion whatever is made to it in either of the libels, which, it must be borne in mind, were not published until long after his death, while the end of Varney is in one of them said to have been preceded with all the horrors of a guilty conscience; and it may be relied on, that had such a report been prevalent as to Forster, it would certainly have been introduced. Wood does not appear to have heard of the rumour, which must be considered as having originated groundlessly among the gossips of the village, and to have been handed down with the other exaggerated traditionary tales respecting Lady Dudley's death; and it is somewhat to be regretted, that those authors, who have promulgated the reports, should have received as authentic such scandals, without endeavouring to ascertain what proof there was for their foundation.

There are very few whose name and character

have been so widely calumniated, and whose origin and life are so falsely represented, as this gentleman's; the insinuations of a rival political party, and the tattle of the village, were magnified upon every repetition of the story, and, as is invariably the case, time and tradition added to the horrors of the tale. And last, but not least, the great novelist of this age, as if universally branding him as a murderer was insufficient for his tale, has voluntarily held him up to public contempt in a new light, as a man of mean birth, bodily deformed; and after loading his memory with the imputation of some of the worst vices that debase human nature, has depicted the close of his life with incidents so dishonourable, as to make mankind recoil at the thought of such a being. In opposition to this account, it is certain that he received the acquittal of the jury, who investigated the mysterious and fatal accident that befel Lady Dudley at his residence; and it has been shewn, that he both lived with credit ten years after that event in the same neighbourhood, and was chosen to represent in Parliament the Borough of Abingdon; and although in the lapse of years rumour sullied his fame, the unbiassed will candidly admit, that there are intimations of his habits being those of refinement, and that he must have been a

man of talent and character, to have maintained such a position, and such associations; while the most prejudiced cannot do otherwise than confess, that his Will discloses a disposition full of kindly feeling and natural generosity.

The tomb of Forster is now looked upon as the chief object of attraction at Cumnor. It is composed of purbeck marble, and stands against the north wall of the chancel, within the altar rails, and is nine feet high by six and a half in length; of no particular order, but a mixture of the Gothic and Italian schools, and in parts very ill proportioned. It contains no date, which has frequently called in question both the period of its erection, and the fact of Forster having been buried at Cumnor. As to the latter, that is conclusively proved by the register, but the precise date of its erection remains questionable; most probably, however, it was constructed early in the reign of Elizabeth. The absence of a date is not at all remarkable, as it was not an uncommon thing for men of station to design or select the monument which was to perpetuate their memory, and even to superintend its erection; and in such instances, the date was either altogether omitted, or left to be supplied after death. And to a certain extent circumstances favour the supposi-

tion, that such might have occurred in this instance, as there can be no doubt of Forster being equal to the task, both of designing the tomb, and composing the inscription; besides which, dying childless, and giving as he did the bulk of his property from his family, there remained behind him no filial duty to demand, or any kindred obligation to prompt the erection of so costly a memorial.

The monument is elevated in a basement of free stone, and the plinth is ornamented with a pannel enclosing quatrefoils. The front is separated into three square compartments, enriched with very elaborate tracery, and the sides contain one pannel similarly adorned. The centre of every compartment had a small brass plate, on which was engraven a shield of arms, but those at the end are now gone; there are eight brass plates let in at the back. The largest represents Forster as an Esquire clad in complete armour, excepting his head-piece, which is lying at his feet. Opposite is the figure of his wife. Each is kneeling on a cushion before a faldstool, on which lies an open book. Behind the female are their three sons in a similar attitude, habited like their mother, in the dress of the Elizabethan age. Above the figures, a brass plate bears his arms, as follows; Quarterly,

first and fourth, three huntsman's horns stringed; second and third, three phæons, their points upwards, with mantling and crest, which is a stag lodged and regardant, gules, charged on the side with a martlet, or, and pierced through the neck with an arrow, argent. Behind his wife is a similar plate with her arms; and at his back a like plate impales their two arms.

Under the figures are four other plates; one large, and the others small; they contain the following poetical record.

Anthonius Forster, generis generosa propago,
Cumneræ Dominus Barcheriensis erat;
Armiger Armigero prognatus patre Ricardo,
Qui quondam Iphlethæ Salopiensis erat,
Quatuor ex isto fluxerunt stemmate nati,
Ex isto Antonius stemmate quartus erat.
Mente sagax, animo præcellens, corpore promptus,
Eloquii dulcis ore disertus erat;
In factis probitas fuit, in sermone venustas,
In vultu gravitas, religione fides;
In patriam pietas, in egenos grata voluntas
Accedunt reliquis annumeranda bonis:
Sic, quod cuncta rapit, rapuit non omnia lethum,
Sed quæ mors rapuit vivida fama dedit.

Argute resonas Citharæ prætendere chordas,
Novit et Aonia concrepuisse lyra.

Gaudebat terræ teneras defigere plantas,
Et mira pulchras construere arte domos.

Composita varias lingua formare loquelas,
Doctus et edocta scribere multa manu.

Anna, Rainoldo Williams, fuit orta parente,
Evasit meritis Armiger ille suis;
Sed minor huic frater, præstanti laude Baronis,
Thamensis viguit gloria magna soli;
Armiger ergo pater, Dominus sed Avunculus Annæ;
Clara erat his meritis clarior Anna suis,
Casta viro, studiosa Dei, dilecta propinquis,
Stirpe beata satis, prole beata satis.
Mater Iohannis, mediaque ætate Roberti,
Et demum Henrici, nobilis illa Parens,
Cynthia Penelope tumulo clauduntur in isto,
Anna sed hoc tumulo sola sepulta jacet.

Ashmole's translation of this epitaph, copied from his Berkshire, will be found in the Appendix, (Q,) but it must not be considered to be represented by the author as a proper translation.

At the corner of the slab covering the tomb are four small ill-proportioned Ionic columns, sustaining a large canopy, the roof of which is sculptured in fourteen circular pannels, with quatrefoil tracery,

dispersed in two rows. On each column rests a small circular pinnacle; and the front of the canopy is divided in the centre by another, which terminates beneath in the form of a boss, and is charged with three hunters' horns stringed, carved in relief. The front is adorned with pannels, similar to those which decorate the roof, and is terminated by a cornice, in imitation of the Tudor flower.

APPENDIX AND NOTES.

Note A, *page* 5.

Lyson is in error on this point, the Chapel was on the south side.

Note B, *page* 26.

A note in p. 644. vol. 5. of Collins' Peerage, gives a detailed account of this Sir John Robsart's military exploits. His services in the Holy Land obtained the crest, which has descended to, and is now borne by, the Earl of Orford; whose ancestor, Edward Walpole, Esq. married Lucy, the only sister of Sir John Robsart, the father of Amy; and upon Amy's death, John, the eldest son of Lucy, became the heir of the Robsart family.

Note to page 29.

Stanfield Hall, the spot rendered recently so notorious by the tragical fate of its possessor, Isaac Jermy, Esq. and his son.

Note C, *page* 31.

Sheen was the ancient name of Richmond.

Note E, *page* 35.

John Flowerdew, Esq. of Hethersett, Norfolk; his fourth son, Edward, in 1584, was made a Baron of the

Exchequer. In 1564, Edward Flowerdew, Esq. one of the family, probably the after Baron and Henry a younger son of Sir Robert Townsend, purchased Stanfield Hall of the Appleyards. On the 19th of August, 1849, William Flowerdew, Esq. a descendant of the Baron of the Exchequer, died at Dundee at the advanced age of ninety.

Note to page 55.

Mr. Norris, here alluded to, was Henry Norris, Esq. of Wytham, who had married one of the daughters and coheiress of Lord Williams.

Note to page 69.

The Duke referred to by Elizabeth is Northumberland, Dudley's father.

H, *page* 75.

In that part of the dialogue between the Scholar, the Gentleman, and the Lawyer, which immediately precedes the passage about to be quoted, the three concur in fixing upon Leicester the crimes of first seducing the Countess of Essex, and then with murdering her husband, by causing him to be poisoned; after which the Scholar thus expresses himself.

" Only for the present I must advertise you, that you " may not take hold so exactly of my Lord's doings in " women's affairs; neither touching their marriages, neither " yet their husbands.

" For first, his Lordship hath a speciall fortune, that " when he desireth any woman's favour, then what person " soever standeth in his way hath the luck to dye quickly, " for the finishing of his desire. As, for example, when " his Lordship was in full hope to marry her Majesty, and " his owne wife stood in his light, as he supposed, he

" did but send her to the house of his servant Forster,
" of Cumver, by Oxford, where shortly after she had the
" chance to fall from a paire of staires, and so to breake
" her neck, but yet without hurting of her hood that stood
" upon her head. But Sir Richard Varney, who, by
" commandement remained with her that day alone, with
" one man and had sent away perforce all her servants
" from her to a market two miles off, he (I say) with his
" man can tell how she dyed, which man being afterwards
" taken for a felony in the Marches of Wales, and offering
" to publish the manner of the said murder, was made away
" prively in the prison; and Sir Richard himself dying
" about the same time in London, cried piteously, and
" blasphemed God, and said to a gentleman of worship of
" mine acquaintance, not long before his death, that all the
" devils in hell did tear him to pieces. The wife also of
" Bald Butler, kinsman to my Lord, gave out the whole
" fact a little before her death. But to return unto my
" purpose, this was my Lord's good fortune, to have his
" wife dye at that time when it was like to turne most to
" his profite."

The discussion in an after part of the libel, turning upon the alleged birth and secret burial of a child, which Lady Sheffield is charged to have borne to Leicester, and to have been delivered of at Dudley Castle, the following ensues.

" *Lawyer.* True it is, (said the Lawyer,) for he doth not
" poison his wives, whereat I somewhat mervaile, especially
" his first wife; whom he chose rather to make away by
" open violence, then by some Italian confortive.

" Hereof (said the Gentleman) may be divers reasons
" alledged. First, that he was not at that time so skilful
" in those Italian wares, nor had about him so skilful
" physicians or chyrurgions for the purpose: nor yet, in

" truth, doe I thinke that his minde was so settled then in " mischiefe, as it hath been since. For you know that " men are not desperate the first day, but doe enter into " wickednesse by degrees, and that with doubt or stagger- " ing of conscience at the beginning. And so he might at " that time be desirous to have his wife made away, for " that she letted his designement, but yet not so stony " hearted as to appoint out the particular manner of her " death, but rather to leave that to the discretion of the " murtherer.

" Secondly, it is not unlike also that he prescribed unto " Sir Richard Varney, at his going thither, that he should " first attempt to kill her by poyson, and if that tooke not " place, then by another way to despatch her howso- " ever. And this I prove by the report of old Dr. Bayly, " who then lived in Oxford, (another manner of man than " he who now liveth about my lord of the same name,) and " was Professor of the Physicke Lecture in the same Uni- " versity. This learned grave man reported for a certaine, " that there was a practice in Cumnor amongst the con- " spiratours to have poysoned the poore lady a little before " she was killed, which was attempted in this order.

" They seeing the good lady sad and heavy, (as one " that knew by her handling that her death was not " far off,) began to perswade her that the disease was " abundance of melancholly and other humours, and there- " fore would needs counsaile her to take some potion, " which she absolutely refused to do, as suspecting still " the worst, they sent one day (unawares to her) for Doctor " Bayly, and desired him to perswade her to take some " little potion at his hands, and they would send to fetch " the same at Oxford upon his prescription, meaning also " to have added somewhat of their own for her comfort,

" as the doctor upon just causes suspected, seeing their " great importunity and the small need the good lady " had of physick; and therefore he flatly denied their " request, misdoubting (as he after reported) lest if they " had poisoned her under the name of his potion, he might " after have been hanged for a cover of their sinne. " Marry, the doctor remained well assured that, this way " taking no place, she should not long escape violence, " as after ensued. And this was so beaten into the heads " of the principall men of the University of Oxford by these " and other means, as for that she was found murthered (as " all men said) by the crowner's inquest, and for that she " being hastely and obscurely buried at Cumver, (which " was condemned above, as not advisedly done,) my lord, " to make plain to the world the great love he bare to " her in her life, and what a griefe the losse of so vertuous a " lady was to his tender heart, would needs have her taken " up againe and reburied in the University Church at " Oxford with great pomp and solemnity; that Doctor " Babington, my lord's chaplain, making the publick " funerall sermon at her second buriall, tript once or twice " in his speech, by recommending to their memories, ' that " vertuous lady so pitifully murthered,' instead of ' so piti- " fully slaine.'

" A third cause of this manner of the ladies death may " be the disposition of my lord's nature, which is bold and " violent where it feareth no resistance, (as all cowardly " natures are by kind,) and, where any difficulty or " danger appeareth, there more ready to attempt all by " art, subtilty, treason, and treachery. And so, for that " he doubted no great resistance in the poore lady to " withstand the hands of them which should offer to " break her neck, he durst the bolder attempt the same " openly."

I, *page* 76.

My first wife fell downe from a paire of staires,
And brake her neck, and so at *Cromner* died,
Whilst her true servants, led with small affaires,
Unto a faire at Abbington did ride,
This dismal hap unto my wife betide:
Whether yee call it chance or destinie,
Too true it is, shee did untimely die.

O! had I now a showre of teares to shed,
Lock't in the empty circles of mine eyes,
Or could I shed in mourning for the dead,
That lost a spouse so young, so faire, so wise,
So faire a corps, so foul a corse now lies;
My hope to have married with a famous Queene,
Drave pity back, and kept my teares unseene.

What man so fond that would not loose a Pearle
To find a Diamond, leave brasse for gold?
Or who would not forsake a gallant girle,
To winne a Queene, great men in awe to hold?
To rule the State of none to her controld;
" O but the steps that lead unto the throne,
" Are dangerous for men to tread upon."

K, *page* 78.

" Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, a very goodly " personage, and singularly well-featured, being a great " favourite to Queen Elizabeth, it was thought, and " commonly reported, that had he been a batchelor, or

" widower, the Queen would have made him her husband.
" To this end, to free himself of all obstacles, he com-
" mands his wife, or perhaps with fair flattering intreaties
" desires her to repose herself here at his servant Anthony
" Forster's house, who then lived at the aforesaid Manor-
" house, (Cumnor Place;) and also prescribed to Sir
" Richard Varney, (a prompter to this design,) at his
" coming hither, that he should first attempt to poison
" her, and if that did not take effect, then by any other
" way whatsoever to dispatch her. This, it seems, was
" proved by the report of Dr. Walter Bayly, sometime
" Fellow of New College, then living in Oxford, and
" Professor of Physic in that University, who, because he
" would not consent to take away her life by poison, the
" Earl endeavoured to displace him from the Court. This
" man, it seems, reported for most certain, that there was
" a practice in Cumnor, among the conspirators, to have
" poisoned this poor innocent lady a little before she was
" killed, which was attempted after this manner. They,
" seeing the good lady sad and heavy, (as one that well
" knew by her other handling that her death was not far
" off,) began to persuade her that her present disease was
" abundance of melancholy, and other humours, &c. and
" therefore would needs counsel her to take some potion,
" which she, absolutely refusing to do, as still suspecting
" the worst: whereupon they sent a messenger on a day
" (unawares to her) for Dr. Bayly, and intreated him to
" persuade her to take some little potion by his direction,
" and they would fetch the same at Oxford, meaning to
" have added something of their own for her comfort, as
" the Doctor upon just cause and consideration did suspect,
" seeing their great importunity, and the small need the
" lady had of physic, and therefore he peremptorily denied

" their request, misdoubting, (as he afterwards reported,)
" least if they had poisoned her under the name of
" his potion, he might have been hanged for a colour
" of their sin; and the Doctor remained still well
" assured, that this way taking no effect, she would not
" long escape their violence, which afterwards happened
" thus. For Sir Richard Varney aforesaid, (the chief pro-
" jector in this design,) who by the Earl's order remained
" that day of her death alone with her, with one man only,
" and Forster, who had that day forcibly sent away all her
" servants from her to Abingdon market, about three miles
" distant from this place, they (I say, whether first stifling
" her, or else strangling her) afterwards flung her down a
" pair of stairs, and broke her neck, using much violence
" upon her; but yet, however, though it was vulgarly
" reported that she by chance fell down stairs, (but yet
" without hurting her hood that was upon her head,) yet
" the inhabitants will tell you there, that she was conveyed
" from her usual chamber, where she lay, to another,
" where the bed's head of the chamber stood close to a
" privy postern door, where they, in the night, came and
" stifled her in her bed, bruised her head very much,
" broke her neck, and at length flung her down stairs,
" thereby believing the world would have thought it a
" mischance, and so have blinded their villainy. But
" behold the mercy and justice of God in revenging and
" discovering this Lady's murder; for one of the persons
" that was a coadjutor in this murder, was afterwards taken
" for a felony in the Marches of Wales, and offering to
" publish the manner of the aforesaid murder, was privately
" made away with in the prison by the Earl's appointment.
" And Sir Richard Varney, the other, dying about the
" same time in London, cried miserably, and blasphemed

" God, and said to a person of note, (who has related the " same to others since,) not long before his death, that all " the devils in hell did tear him in pieces. Forster likewise " after this fact, being a man formerly addicted to hospi- " tality, company, mirth, and music, was afterwards " observed to forsake all this, and being affected with much " melancholy and pensiveness, (some say with madness,) " pined and drooped away. The wife too of Bald Butler, " kinsman to the Earl, gave out the whole fact a little " before her death. Neither are the following passages to be " forgotten: That as soon as ever she was murdered they " made haste to bury her, before the Coroner had given in " his inquest, (which the Earl himself condemned as not done " advisedly,) which her father, Sir John Robertsett, (as I " suppose,) hearing of, came with all speed hither, caused " her corpse to be taken up, the Coroner to sit upon her, " and further enquiry to be made concerning this business " to the full; but it was generally thought, that the Earl " stopped his mouth, and made up the business betwixt " them; and the good Earl, to make plain to the world " the great love he bare to her while alive, what a grief " the loss of so virtuous a Lady was to his tender heart, " caused (though the thing by these and other means was " beaten into the heads of the principal men of the " University of Oxford) her body to be re-buried in " St. Marie's Church in Oxford, with great pomp and " solemnity. It is remarkable, when Dr. Babington (the " Earl's Chaplain) did preach the funeral Sermon, he tript " once or twice in his speech, by recommending to their " memories that virtuous Lady so pitifully murdered, instead " of saying so pitifully slain.

" This Earl, after all his murders and poisonings, was " himself poisoned by that which was prepared for others,

" (some say by his wife,) at Cornbury Lodge, (though Baker " in his Chronicle would have had it at Killingworth,) anno " 1588."

L, *page* 78.

CUMNER HALL.

The dews of summer night did fall,
The moon (sweet regent of the sky)
Silver'd the walls of Cumner Hall,
And many an oak that grew thereby.

Now nought was heard beneath the skies,
(The sounds of busy life were still,)
Save an unhappy Lady's sighs,
That issued from that lonely pile.

" Leicester," she cried, " is this thy love
" That thou so oft has sworn to me,
" To leave me in this lonely grove,
" Immur'd in shameful privity ?

" No more thou comest with lover's speed
" Thy once beloved bride to see ;
" But be she alive, or be she dead,
" I fear stern Earl's the same to thee.

" Not so, the usage I received,
" When happy in my father's hall :
" No faithless husband then me grieved,
" No chilling fears did me appal.

" I rose up with the cheerful morn,
" No lark more blithe, no flower more gay;
" And, like the bird that haunts the thorn,
" So merrily sung the live long day.

" If that my beauty is but small,
" Among Court ladies all despis'd;
" Why didst thou rend it from that hall,
" Where, scornful Earl, it well was priz'd?

" And when you first to me made suit,
" How fair I was you oft would say!
" And proud of conquest, pluck'd the fruit,
" Then left the blossom to decay.

" Yes, now neglected and despis'd,
" The rose is pale—the lily's dead,
" But he that once their charms so priz'd,
" Is sure the cause those charms are fled.

" For know, when sick'ning grief doth prey,
" And tender love's repaid with scorn,
" The sweetest beauty will decay—
" What flow'ret can endure the storm?

" A Court, I'm told, is beauty's throne,
" Where every lady's passing rare;
" That, eastern flow'rs, that shame the sun,
" Are not so glowing, not so fair.

" Then, Earl, why didst thou leave the beds
" Where roses, and where lilies vie,
" To seek a primrose, whose pale shades
" Must sicken, when those gaudes are by?

" 'Mong rural beauties I was one,
" Among the fields wild flow'rs are fair ;
" Some country swain might me have won,
" And thought my beauty passing rare.

" But, Leicester, (or I much am wrong,)
" Or 'tis not beauty lures thy vows:
" Rather ambition's gilded crown
" Makes thee forget thy humble spouse.

" Then, Leicester, why, again I plead,
" (The injur'd surely may repine,)
" Why didst thou wed a country maid,
" When some fair Princess might be thine ?

" Why didst thou praise my humble charms,
" And oh ! then leave them to decay ?
" Why didst thou win me to thy arms,
" Then leave to mourn the live long day ?

" The village maidens of the plain
" Salute me lowly as they go,
" Envious they mark my silken train,
" Nor think a Countess can have woe.

" The simple nymphs ! they little know
" How far more happy's their estate—
" To smile for joy, than sigh for woe ;
" To be content, than to be great.

" How far less blest am I than them ?
" Daily to pine and waste with care !
" Like the poor plant: that from its stem
" Divided, feels the chilling air.

" Nor (cruel Earl) can I enjoy,
" The humble charms of solitude;
" Your minions proud my peace destroy,
" By sullen frowns or pratings rude.

" Last night, as sad I chanced to stray,
" The village death bell smote my ear;
" They wink'd aside, and seemed to say,
" Countess, prepare, thy end is near!

" And now while happy peasants sleep,
" Here I sit lonely and forlorn;
" No one to soothe me as I weep,
" Save Philomel on yonder thorn.

" My spirits flag—my hopes decay—
" Still that dread death bell smites my ear,
" And many a boding seems to say,
" Countess, prepare, thy end is near!"

Thus sore and sad that Lady grieved,
In Cumner Hall so lone and drear;
And many a heartfelt sigh she heaved,
And let fall many a bitter tear.

And e'er the dawn of day appeared,
In Cumner Hall so lone and drear,
Full many a piercing scream was heard,
And many a cry of mortal fear.

The death bell thrice was heard to ring,
An aëreal voice was heard to call;
And thrice the raven flapp'd its wing
Around the tow'rs of Cumner Hall.

The mastiff howled at village door,
The oaks were shatter'd on the green:
Woe was the hour—for never more
That hapless Countess e'er was seen.

And in that manor now no more
Is cheerful feast and sprightly ball;
For ever since that dreary hour
Have spirits haunted Cumner Hall.

The village maids, with fearful glance
Avoid the ancient moss grown wall;
Nor ever lead the merry dance
Among the groves of Cumner Hall.

Full many a traveller oft hath sighed,
And pensive wept the Countess' fall,
As wand'ring onwards they've espied
The haunted tow'rs of Cumner Hall.

Note M, *page* 84.

The Commissioners, in their Reports on the Public Records, vol. i. p. 410. Desertations in Doomsday, state, that "Beasts were caught by driving them into a hedge or "paled park of a wood or forest, as elephants are in India, "or deer in North America. This is the haia." There is only mention of one haia in the forest of Wreken, and there can be little if any question, but that it was situate on the north side of the Wreken hill, as at this day there is a large Inn, called "The Haye Gate," ten miles from Shrewsbury, on the great road from Wolverhampton,

known as the Watling street road, (the *via vitelliana* of the Romans,) and if this was the site of the gate of the haia, then the enclosure must have been bounded by this Roman road on the north, and probably by an ancient road by which tourists go from Haye Gate, to ascend the Wreken on the west.

Note N, *page* 85.

The Wreken was also known as Gilbert's hill. Cam. Brit. 543.

O, *page* 89.

"You shall truly execute the office of forester or keeper "of the King's wild beasts in the walk called "within the forest of you shall be of good "behaviour yourself towards his Majesty's wild beasts, and "the vert and venison of the same forest. You shall not "conceal the offence of any person either in vert or venison, "that shall be done within your charge, but as well the "same offence as also all attachments you shall present at "the next court of attachments or swainmote, which shall "first happen to be holden for the same forest, and you "shall to the utmost of your power maintain and keep "the assize of the forest, and in all things the King's right "defend, concerning the same, so long as you shall be "keeper there. So help you God."

P, *page* 96.

ANTHONY FORSTER'S WILL.

In the Name of God. Amen. The v^th^ daie of November, in y^e^ yeare of oure Lord god, 1572, I Anthonye Forster, of Comenore, in y^e^ Countie of Barke, Esquier, being of perfitt mynde and memorie, I thanke my god therfore, doe make and ordeine this my last will and testamet in maner and forme followinge. First, revokinge, anullinge, and forsakinge all wills and testamets had or made by me the saied Anthonie Forster, before this my present will and testament, I do suerlie and vndoubtedlie trust and assure my selfe to be saued, and to enioye the everlastinge blisse of heaven, throughe the onlie mercie and meritts off y^e^ Sone of god, my Lord and M^r^. Christ Jesus. And so bequeath my soule to the Holie Trynitie, and my bodie to be buried at the discrecon of my executours. Item, I give and bequeath to y^e^ right honorable the Lord Robart, Earle of Leicester, my Mannor and Lordshipe of Comenore, in the saied Countie of Barke, w^th^ all the proffits and comodities therunto belonginge, w^th^ all and singler their appurtinucs, together w^th^ Comenore Woode, and the hundred of Hornemore, and my lease of Whitley leaze, in the saied Countie of Barke, To haue and to holde the saied Mannor, and all other the premiss's to him and his heires for euer, upon condicon tha the saied right honorable Earle, his heires and assignes, shall paie, or cause to be paied, one thousande twoe hundreth poundes of lawfull Englishe money for the same, in maner and forme followinge, That is to saie, To my welbeloued wief Anne, five hundreth poundes, and to John Forster, sone of my

brother Michaell Forster, one hundred poundes; and to Richard Forster, sone and heire to my nephew George Forster, one hundreth pounds; and to Robert Forster, Edward Forster, and John Forster, brethren to the saied Richard Forster, fourtie pounds apece, viz. to euerie of them fourtie pounds, and the rest of that twelue hundreth pounds to myne executours towards the paymet and pformance of my debts and legacies. Item, I give to Thomas Dudley, Esquier, attendente vppon the saied Earle, my sorrell geldinge, w^ch^ I had of Ruffin for a heriott. Item, I give and bequeath to my said wief the vse off my pastures or groundes, called Longe Deane, w^ch^ I houlde by lease for diuers yeres yet to come, for and during the tearme of twentie yeres yf she live so long, my saied wief payeng the lords rents, and after hir decease I giue my saied lease of the saied pasture to my nephew, Thoms Forster of Oxford. Item, I give to my cozen, Thomas Selman off Breninghm in y^e^ Countie of Warwick, one hundreth pounds of lawfull Englishe money; and I do forgive him all the debts, reckonings, and accopts that he oweth me, and haue bien betwen him and me (or may be) from the beginninge of the worlde to this daie. Item, I giue and bequeath to the saied Thomas Forster, my nephew, all my beddinge and stuffe w^ch^ I haue lyeng in my lodginge, at the signe of the catte and fidle in Flete-strete in London, all writings and specialties onelie excepted; and doe forgiue him tenne pounds w^ch^ he oweth me by his obligacon, and for the w^ch^ Giles Swett standeth bounde w^th^ him. Item, I giue and bequeath to my saied nephew, Thoms Forster, y^e^ revercon off one coppie houlde w^th^ in the saied Mannor of Comenore, w^ch^ the widowe of George Carter houldeth during hir widowhode, To haue and to holde the same to him for terme of his lief,

accordinge to y^e^ custome off the saied manor, ymediatlie after the deceace, forfeyture, surrendor, or season of the state of y^e^ saied widowe of George Carter. And I giue to my saied cozen, Thoms Forster, fourtie poundes of Englishe money, vpon condicon that he, y^e^ saied Thomas, shall giue his best helpe, councell, and furtherunce to myne executours for the pforminge of my will and testamet in all points. Item, I giue and bequeath to my syster in lawe, Edithe Staffert, one hundreth and five pounds, in recompence of all man^r^ reckoninges, matters, and demaunds betwen hir and me, w^th^ hundreth and five pounds John Noorthe of Shipto, w^th^ in the saied Countie of Berks, oweth me; and for the w^ch^ I haue in pawne and in gage the lease of the saied Nourthe of that wherein he nowe dwelleth; and w^th^ that I will that my syster shalbe paied. Item, I giue and bequeath to y^e^ M^r^, Fellowes, and Scholers of Ballioll Colledge in Oxford, one hundreth pounds off lawfull Englishe money, to be bestowed there at the good discrecon off Mr. Adam Squyer, nowe M^r^ there, and Mr. John Renall, Archdeacon of Oxforde. Item, I do forgeue, remytt, release, anihilate, and make voied to the saied Adam Squier, all maner debts, writinges, bills, and bonds w^ch^ are due, and be betwene me and the saied Adam Squier from the beginninge of the worlde vntill this daie. Item, I giue to Anthonie Holborne, my godsone, twenti pounds; and to Francs Holborne, his syster, other twentie pounds. Item, I do forgeue my brother in lawe, Mr. Rockley, thirten pounds sixe shillings eight pence, which he oweth me vppon his specialtie. Item, I giue and bequeath to my saied wief, all my householde stuffe, plate, and cattell w^ch^ I haue w^th^ in the mannor howse of Comenore, and w^th^ in the grownde off y^e^ sayed Manor, w^th^ all maner my corne. Item, I giue and bequeath to Anthonye

Forster, my godson, the revercon of John Francklins houlde in Comenore, for terme off his lief, after y^e^ custome of y^e^ manor. Item, I giue to my nephew, Walter Forster, sone to my brother Thoms Forster, tenne poundes of lawfull Englishe money. Ite, I giue to my cozen, Henry Grymes, twentie pounds. Ite, I forgeue, remytt, and release, and make voyde to my lovinge and painefull frend, Robert Bellamie, Doctour of Phisicke, twentie poundes w^ch^ he oweth me, and all maner bills, and bondes, and reckonings betwen him and me from y^e^ begininge of the worlde vnto this daie, in consideracon of his paine and travell w^th^ me in this my sicknes. Item, I giue to my ss^r^unte, Marye Edmondes, twentie nobles. Ite, I giue to my olde and trustie ss^r^unte, John Harris, the Bayliewick of the hundred of Hornemore, and the howse wherin he dwelleth w^th^ the close thereunto adioyninge rent free for one and twentie yeres. Item, I giue to my lovinge serunte, John Ellis, the revercon of Raynolde Daye, his houlde in Comeno^r^ for terme of his lief, after y^e^ custome of the Mannor. Ite, I giue to my ss^r^unte, Margaret, fyve poundes. Ite, I give to Anthonie Bostocke of Abingdon tenne pounds, w^ch^ he oweth me. Item, I giue to Richard, my serunte, fouer markes, to be receiued of Thoms Wilson, late his M^r^, w^ch^ the saied Wilson oweth me. Item, I giue to my fouer ss^r^unts musicons twelve pounds tenne shillinges equallie amongest them; the w^ch^ some the saied Thomas Wilson oweth me vpon his specialtie. Item, I giue to my serunte, Henry Michell, twentie nobles. Item, I giue to my serunt, Robert Callis my butler, fortie shillinges. Item, I giue to myne olde acquaintenunce, Robert Rodes, my sixe songe bookes w^ch^ he him selffe did prick. Item, I giue to Harte, my warryner, fower marcks for his wage, and twoe loades of

haie so longe as he contynueth ssrunte and kep of the warren. Item, I giue to the rest of all my householde ssrunts one halffe yeres wage, besydes that which is dew to them. Item, I giue to Mabell Stafferton

Ite, I giue and bequeath to the Mayor of Abingdon, and his brethren, twentie nobles in money, for certaine sermons to be made there at the discrecon of my Overseers. Item, I giue to Elizabeth Osbaston twentie pounds. The rest of all my goods and chattells herein not giuen, or not bequeathed, my debts and legacies being paied, I giue to my saied kinnesman Thomas Selman, and my welbeloued wief Anne Forster, whom I make my executours of this my last will and testamet; charginge them, and either of them, as they will answere in the terrible daie of the most dreadfull iudgement, trulie and iustlie to execute and pforme this my last will and testament in all points. And I make and ordeine Doctor Renall and Adam Squier of Oxford, overseers of this my last will and testamet. And I doe giue to either of them for their paynes, to Doctour Renall my yonger stoned horse; and I give to Adam Squyer the stoned horse that I was wont to ride on my selfe. In witness wherof, and of all the premisses, I the saied Anthonie Forstr haue putto my hande, and to this my last will and testamet, in the presence of Robert Bellam, Phisition; Anthonie Forster, Ada Squier, Henry Greams, Nicholas Staverton, France Noble, John Ellis, Thomas Forster.

Q, *page* 103.

" ANTHONY FORSTER, ESQ. the generous offspring of a " generous race; Lord of the Manor of Cumnor, Berks; " son of Richard Forster, late of Salop, Esq. who had four " sons, the youngest whereof was Anthony.

" In person fair, and of the brightest sense,
" Where wisdom joined with smoothest eloquence;
" In action, justice, speech, a flowing grace,
" Faith in religion, gravity of face;
" A patriot firm, and to the needy kind,
" With numerous graces more adorned his mind:
" Death took too much, (what can his power survive,)
" Yet spite of death, his fame shall ever live."

" Skilled in the softest notes the muses sing,
" Or on the harp to touch the sounding string;
" Pleased with the florist's tender nursing care,
" Or architect, stupendous piles to rear.
" Read in the tongues the ancient sages taught,
" And learned works confess how well he wrote."

" Ann, daughter of Rainolde Williams, Esq. whose " younger brother, a Baron, shone the glory of Berkshire; " though her father was but a Squire, her uncle was a " Lord; chaste to her husband, devout towards God, and " beloved by her neighbours. Sufficiently happy in her " progenitors, happy enough in her offspring. Mother of " John, in her middle age of Robert, and lastly of Henry; " Cynthia and Penelope are inclosed in that tomb, but Ann " alone lies buried here."

SYNOPSIS OF FACTS CHRONOLOGICALLY ARRANGED.

A.D.

1525 There are grounds for placing the birth of Amy Robsart about this year.

1535 or thereabouts, the marriage of Anthony Forster with Ann Williams.

The following dates are positively ascertained.

1549 The public marriage of Lord Robert Dudley with Amy Robsart is evidenced by the entry in King Edward's Journal. See p. 32.

1554 Sir John Robsart, father of Amy, dies,

1557 The internal evidence of Amy's letter to Mr. Flowerdew induces us to place the estrangement of Lord Dudley about this date.

1560 Amy's death; and communications from France about the Queen's marriage with Dudley.

1561 Forster, having before only been a tenant, now purchases Cumnor of Mr. Owen.

1562 Forster appears publicly, and with personal influence, at Oxford.

1563 It was not until this date Dudley was made Earl of Leicester.

1566 The debate appears to have occurred in the Privy Council about Lord Leicester's marriage to Queen Elizabeth.

1570 Forster elected to represent Abingdon in Parliament.

1572 Forster's death. He leaves Cumnor to his patron, the Earl of Leicester.

1575 Elizabeth's visit, and the revels at Kenilworth.

1588 Leicester died.

1599 Death of Ann, the widow of Anthony Forster, at Cumnor.

SOME REMARKS

ON

SIR W. SCOTT'S STATEMENTS IN KENILWORTH.

In comparing with the preceding table of dates the narrative given by Sir Walter Scott in his interesting historical novel Kenilworth, the reader will be surprised to find the extent to which his account varies from sober history. It would be an excess of criticism to require, that a writer of fiction should substantiate every date and incident used by him; in fact, it would be inconsistent with the nature of fiction; still, without being hypercritical, one may demur to admit unsupported allegations of crime, and may repudiate the concentration of events extending over twenty or more years into a very limited space, the period of scarce one year. In both respects has Sir W. Scott erred; he makes the marriage of Dudley with Amy, and the visit of Elizabeth to Kenilworth, events of no great distance; he represents Anthony Forster to be son of the Abbot's Reeve, and a widower, with an only child Janet, in 1575; whereas Forster was descended of a good family, and died without any of his children surviving him in 1572, having represented Abingdon in Parliament the

last two years of his life; and his widow survived until the year 1599, that is, 50 years subsequent to Amy's marriage; he describes that marriage as a private one; whereas we have King Edward's testimony that it was publicly solemnized at the Royal Palace of Sheen, and consequently there could never have been any secret about it. Nor was she abstracted from her friends by guile. He adopts the erroneous assertion of the Earl of Leicester being the owner of Cumnor at the time of the marriage; whereas he was not made an Earl until fourteen years after that event, and not till three years after Amy's death; and the deeds relating to the estate indisputably substantiate, that Cumnor did not then belong to him, but to Mr. Owen, of whom Forster shortly afterwards purchased it, and subsequently left it in 1572 to the Earl.

The allusion to the death of Amy's father (who throughout the novel is miscalled Sir Hugh) very soon after his daughter, is another error; he died six years before her.

As regards Sir Richard Varney, and the accomplice, who, it is said, by Leicester's direction, *was privately made away with in prison,* their names must have originated with other groundless assertions of the period, as no allusion whatever is made to them in the correspondence respecting the death, or in any authentic document.

There is no reason to believe that an inn, like the one described by Scott, existed at Cumnor in the reign of Elizabeth, and both that and the landlord of the inn were purely his inventions; but it certainly is singular that he should have chanced to hit upon the name of a person, who no doubt at the time of Lady Dudley's death was living in the village, as the name of Frances Gosling appears in the Parish register of burials in 1562; but no other mention of the name has been discovered in the subsequent registers, and there is no tradition in the village of the family having lived in the place; it is quite clear that this was the surmise of Scott, who never had access to the register, nor was he ever at Cumnor.

It is not to be conceived, that Lord Dudley would have been raised to an Earldom, had the imputation of guilt really attached to him after the coroner's inquest; and much less that the Queen would entertain affection for a nobleman whose fame was so dishonoured. It has been shewn in the preceding pages, that the rumours were greatly encouraged at Paris, and thence transmitted to England. The Jesuits are suspected of systematically traducing the character of their religious and political opponents; they would not spare a zealous upholder of contrary views; and the vulgar are ever ready to welcome and to exaggerate reports that tend to the disparagement of

those elevated above them. It is to be regretted, that the great novelist himself appears to enjoy any opportunity of holding up to ridicule or suspicion parties making any pretension to seriousness in religion and practical godliness; and his repeated insinuations of hypocrisy against the puritans, with whom he classes Forster, betray the same culpable spirit.

The result of observing all the above inaccuracies in Scott's account must be, that however deeply we may be interested with the pictures he has drawn of the times and the characters, we shall discreetly distinguish between imaginations of fiction and the sober information of history. As long as the tale is regarded as purely fictitious, it would be literary prudery to make objections to it. But when there is danger of its being regarded as grounded on facts, the student of truth will desire to see due discrimination made between fiction grounded on the superstitious traditions of the ignorant peasantry, and the incontrovertible records of history. He will pause ere he receives as authentic the surmises which Jesuits encouraged against a protestant Queen and her favourite courtiers of the reformation party, and which the countrymen of Mary Queen of Scots have readily acquiesced in, and inconsiderately propagated, to the disparagement of Elizabeth. And the evidence that tends to exculpate the memories of the Earl

of Leicester and of Anthony Forster from the atrocities laid to their charge, will be welcome to the lover of impartial justice.

The description of the Mansion of Cumnor Place, previously to its being dismantled, was chiefly supplied by the lately deceased Vicar of the parish, who was familiar with the building long before any part was taken down. Much interesting information was also supplied by him, which could not otherwise have been gained, as few survive capable of giving a statement from actual inspection of the premises.

In writing the preceding pages, it has been endeavoured, as much as possible, to represent the locality as in its original state, and the scenes and personages connected with it, without bias or favour; every thing like romance, or the introduction of argument not warranted by authentic information, has been avoided; and if, in narrating the traditions of the village, a departure has been made from the homely language in which those traditions were expressed, their meaning has not been perverted by any unnecessary finish of words.

BRIEF HISTORY

OF

THE PARISH OF CUMNOR

AND ITS ANTIQUITIES.

Connected with most of the religious establishments of the middle ages, will be found some extraordinary legendary tale to account for the origin of the building. Many of the earliest of these societies almost invariably imputed their existence to the interposition of the Deity, or to some miraculous event; and the magnificent Abbey of Abingdon is one of the numerous instances.

Aben, the son of a British Consul, more fortunate than his father in escaping the general massacre by Hengist in the year 460, retreated for safety into the woody district now known as Chilswell, one of the tythings of Cumnor; where, it is said, he erected an oratory, or chapel, and passed the rest of his life in strict seclusion, and in acts of piety. The tradition associating his

name with Chilswell is, that being one day very thirsty, he addressed himself to the Almighty, who answered his supplications, by causing a spring of water immediately to burst forth, and from it the holy man satisfied his thirst. The spring was ever afterwards looked upon as sacred, and regarded with the greatest veneration. Such an event was at once considered as a mark of God's especial favour to the locality; and it is therefore not surprising, that in after years the spot should have been selected for the site of a monastery.

About the year 675, Heane, who had devoted his life to the religious austerities of the age, obtained from his uncle Cissa, a petty King of the West Saxons, a piece of ground at Chilswell for the purpose of founding a monastery; he also obtained, from him and other persons of wealth, grants of land and gifts wherewith to endow it; and he gave a large portion of his own inheritance for the same purpose; but, according to the legend, all his efforts to rear the fabric were ineffectual, for what was built up one day, generally fell down the next. This was viewed by Heane, and those engaged in the erection, as an indication of the Divine displeasure; whereupon Heane sought the advice of a hermit who lived in an

adjoining wood, and to him related these ominous circumstances. The hermit at once told him, that the Almighty had revealed to him in a vision His disapproval of the site, and that it was the Divine will that it should be removed three miles off, to a place called the Seuksham, the ancient name of Abingdon. Heane followed the advice of the hermit, and in five years afterwards completed the erection of the Abbey, which he dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and of which he became the first Abbot.

Chilswell is a manor within the manor of Cumnor, and consists of a lone farm; the ancient manor house is now in the last state of decay. The above-narrated traditions, however, are not the only ones connected with the place. It was originally called Childswell, from the alleged fecundizing virtues of the before-mentioned spring or well, which is at the present day pointed out by the labouring population.

In the Lib. Nig. Scac. vol. ii. p. 560. Chilswell, and the virtue of the water, are thus alluded to.

"Dr. Leonard Hutton (in his remarkable account "of the *Antiquities of Oxford,* printed by me at "the end of *Textus Rossensis*) is pleased to take "notice of this Chilswell, which he calls Childs-

" well, and observes that it was so denominated " from a particular virtue in a certain well there, " that made barren women bring forth children, " especially if they first addressed themselves to " the chaplains that successively officiated here, in " a certain old chapel that was near the well, of " which chapel I have often heard mention. And " some say, the remains of such a chapel were " there very lately. Nor indeed can there be the " least doubt of such efficacy in the well, (which " is still to be seen about a furlong eastward of " the farm-house,) nothing being more common " than in the olden time to frequent wells in a " devout manner, upon account of divers qualities " for which they were celebrated."

More than one attempt has been made to discover the derivation of the word Cumnor. The learned Dugdale supposes it to have been taken from Cumanus, the second Abbot of Abingdon, whose death has been placed about the year 784; while the talented Dr. Buckler, who was vicar of the parish, apprehends it was derived from St. Coleman, or Cuman, a Scotch or Irish Saint, who lived about the sixth or seventh century.

The Saxon Kings were great benefactors to Abingdon Abbey; and before the period of the

Norman conquest the whole of Cumnor had fallen into its hands. Henry the First received his education within its walls; and he, as well as his successors to the Crown, added largely to the privileges of the society; which so increased, as to become one of the most opulent of the religious houses in the realm.

Upon the dissolution of the Monasteries, the parish of Cumnor was divided among royal favourites, and those who had aided the King in his designs to overthrow the popish supremacy. It was then of very much greater extent than it now is. The parishes of North Hinksey, South Hinksey, and Wootton, formed part of it, and were chapels of ease to the mother church: and Cassington in Oxfordshire is said also to have belonged to it; but a close consideration of the locality, and other circumstances, will remove any idea of that sort, that may have been entertained. From the Hinkseys and Wootton, it was separated by Montague, second Earl of Abingdon, the lay-rector of the parish, and patron of the vicarage, in the early part of the last century.

Long previously to the reformation, Cumnor was divided as it now is into ten tythings; viz. Cumnor, Whitley, Stroud, Swinford, Hill End,

Botley, Chawley, Chilswell, Henwood, and Bradley; but since the enclosure of the parish in 1820, and subsequent alterations, the boundaries of the tythings have been but little regarded.

The principal of the tythings is that of Cumnor, which included the village. This, as has been previously shewn, upon the dissolution of Abingdon Abbey, was comprised in a grant that was immediately afterwards made to Thomas Penthecost, alias Rowland, the last abbot of the monastery. After his death, it passed into the hands of George Owen, Esq. physician to Henry VIII. whose son disposed of it to Anthony Forster, who willed it to the Earl of Leicester; and from the latter it came into the family of the present owner, the Earl of Abingdon. There is, however, a small portion of this tything belonging to St. John's College, Oxford.

The chief objects of interest within this tything are, the church, and the site of the mansion of Cumnor Place. The church is dedicated to St. Michael, and stands on an elevation in the centre of the village, which gives it a bolder and more stately appearance than the generality of country churches; and it is generally allowed to be one of the handsomest and most compact in the neighbourhood. Within these last twelve

months it has been restored internally, and has undergone a course of thorough repair.

In the Norman survey, a church is mentioned as existing at Cumnor, in place of which the present edifice is a substitution. It consists of a nave, with north aisle; a chapel, forming a south transept; and chancel, with a tower at the west end. The nave, chancel, and tower, are the oldest portions of the fabric, and were erected by the ecclesiastics of Abingdon during the thirteenth century. The chapel is dedicated to St. Catherine, and the aisle to St. Thomas. These parts were added by the same body in the following century; but there have been so many additions and alterations in the building, to meet the changes and notions of succeeding ages, that but little of the first design remains; and the rough cast, with which it is externally coated, greatly detracts from its true features and antiquity.

The tower is built in a style exhibiting the transition from Norman to Early English, or rather a very early specimen of the Early English style, perhaps about the year 1280. There are two small Early English windows on the sides of it, excepting on the south, which has been rebuilt. The door-way seems to be of a rather earlier date than the parts above it.

The nave has undergone material alteration; the ancient windows have all been closed, and superseded by a solitary and singular one; the mouldings of which are common plain Early English. A little to the east of this window is part of a Norman corbel table, the rest having been cut off on the building of the chapel. The nave has a clerestory, which was added about the early part of the fourteenth century.

The north aisle was built probably about the year 1320, when the clerestory was added to the nave. This aisle is lighted by three windows of the common flowing decorated pattern.

The chapel is of the same date as the aisle, and has three windows, which retain their primitive character; but each is varied in form. Those on the south and east sides are of the common kind of flowing tracery; the one on the west side is of a somewhat uncommon form, and its mouldings shew it to be early in the fourteenth century. There is a similar window in North Hinksey church, which, as before mentioned, was formerly a chapel of ease to Cumnor.

The chancel is considerably turned to the north from the line of the nave, and with the rest of the building was refitted towards the beginning of the

fourteenth century. In the south wall are two windows of the early decorated order, about the date 1300, and both are inserted in the original window openings. The east window is generally the most admired in the church, and corresponds with the one on the south side of the chapel; but it is worked with more than ordinary care and delicacy. The mouldings are fine, and the proportions unrivalled. It may be seen to greater advantage from the interior of the chancel.

In the inside of the church is an exceedingly fine equilateral arch, of very Early English order, supporting the east side of the tower; it is now inclosed with masonry, but originally it was designed to open the tower to the nave.

The nave is separated from the aisle by three arches; affixed to the wall at the east end is a brass plate, bearing the following quaint inscription.

An Epitaph vpon ye Death of James Welsh.

The body of James Welsh lyeth bvryed heere,
Who left this mortall life at fovrescore yeare;
One thousand and six hundred twelve he dyed,
And for the poore did christianly provide,
Accordinge to the talent God had lent,
Five povndes he gave, of zeale, and good Intent.

The Fruit makes knowne the natvre of the tree,
Good life the Christian, even so was hee;
Whose tyme well spent, unto his Sovle did gaine
The heavenly rest, where holy saynts remayne.

This memory a lovinge wife unto her husband gave,
To shew her hart remembers him, though death inclose his grave;
The gifte he gave vnto the poore, she hath inlarged the same,
With five povndes added to his five, vnto her Christian fame
Hath placed them both to ye Churchmen here, no wise to be delay'd,
Bvt that yearely to the poore of Comner be a marke of silver pay'd;
Which is the fvll appointed rent of the whole bequeathed some;
And so for ever shall remayne, vntill the day of dome,
In Comner, for the poore's reliefe, Margery Welsh doth will
The charge of this, when she is deade, may be performed still.

To the antiquary, perhaps the most interesting objects in the church are the open seats in the north aisle and chancel, relics of the church fittings during the Romish period; the poppy heads of those in the aisle are bold and elegant, but those in the chancel are the most attractive. One is especially worthy of notice, and, although muti-

lated, is still exceedingly beautiful; it has three shields on each side, one above and two beneath, each bearing emblems of the crucifixion, intertwined with oak leaves.

There is a piscina in the chapel, and another in the aisle; and in the south wall of the former are two recesses, in each of which is a stone coffin, containing the remains of an Abbot. These coffins are about the date of the middle of the thirteenth century.

The original font in past ages was removed from the church, but where it was taken to is not known; recently a handsome one has been given to the parish by some members of the family of the last two Vicars.

Close by the churchyard, adjoining the site of Cumnor Place, is a very humble building, known as the church-house, occupied by aged poor of the parish. It was formerly preserved by the parishioners for holding their annual feasts, a custom now only known in the breach. The ancient fire-place may still be seen, and the spits and utensils for cooking are said to have remained until about a century ago.

A short distance below the church-house is a barn, formerly of an immense size; parts of the

ancient building may still be seen. It was originally built by the Abbey, for the reception of the rectorial or great tithes, and retains its old name, the Tithe Barn. Thomas Baskeville, a native of the adjoining parish of Sunningwell, thus characterizes it, and three similar buildings in Berkshire, which had been erected for the like purpose.

> The fourths at Cumnor near that Church
> I can't tell where, it has a porch,
> But as to length in days of yore,
> 'Tis now much shorter than before [a].

Whitly Tything is small, and has no object worthy of notice beyond a mineral spring, called by the inhabitants the physic spring, which is mentioned by both Camden and Lyson.

In the tythings of Stroud, Swinford, Botley, Chawley, Henwood, and Bradley, there is nothing of any public interest.

In Hill End tything is an old mansion, called Dane or Dean Court. It originally belonged to, and was occupied by, some of the fraternity of Abingdon Abbey. Hearne, in the Glossary to Peter

[a] These doggrel rhymes are supposed to have been written about the year 1690, and are extracted from the Baskeville Papers, Har. MSS. 4716. 4762.

Langtoft, gives an account of this place, very little however of the ancient structure, excepting the chapel, now exists; and even of this, all trace internally has been removed, but in the outer walls are the remains of the chapel windows.

There were some very singular customs in the parish, but circumstances are so altered, that here, as in most other places, they are now fallen into disuse; and, but for the record of them left by Dr. Buckler, and which may be found in the Bib. Top. Brit. most of them at the present day would, in all probability, have been entirely forgotten.

As regards the Vicars of the parish, no other account can be given of them than what the registers afford. The first name that appears is that of

William Barefoot, in 1599, when the register commences, but when he died or quitted does not appear; in 1608 is the name of

Hugh Hant, who was succeeded by

Thomas Drope, B.D. Rector of Ardley, Oxon. buried at Cumnor, Feb. 27, 1644, and was succeeded by

John Langford, who died 1681; and was succeeded by

William Peacock, M.A. Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and Rector of Aston, Berks, who died Dec. 11, 1728; and was succeeded by

Richard Kent, Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and Rector of Ducklington, who died Nov. 24, 1746; and was succeeded by

John Simpson, M.A. Rector of Frilsham, Berks, who died Nov. 2, 1755; and was succeeded by

Benjamin Buckler, D.D. Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and Keeper of the Archives in that University, who died Dec. 24, 1780; and was succeeded by

James Hakewell, Vicar of Fritwell and North Aston, Oxon. who died Dec. 22, 1798; and was succeeded by

John Slatter, M.A. Vicar of Stanton Harcourt, Oxon. and Chaplain of New College, Oxford, who died July 11, 1810; and was succeeded by

William Slatter, M.A. Rector of Hethe, Oxon, and Chaplain of Christ Church, Oxford, who died November 8, 1849; and was succeeded by

Hon. C. F. Octavius Spencer, M.A. the present Incumbent.

There are few agricultural parishes that have been so favoured as Cumnor with charitable benefactors; the bequests annually derived from charities and distributed among the poor amount to upwards of seventy pounds, besides an accustomed yearly donation from Lord Abingdon.

THE END.

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